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Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side.

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POETRY AND THE DRAMA

LEAVES OF GRASS
BY WALT WHITMAN

WALT WHITMAN, born near Huntington, New York, U.S.A., 1819. Editor of various newspapers and writer for popular magazines. Published *Leaves of Grass*, 1855, adding to the volume poems written later. A hospital nurse during the Civil War; later, a Government clerk. Partially paralysed in 1873. Died, in Camden, New Jersey, 1892.

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LEAVES OF GRASS



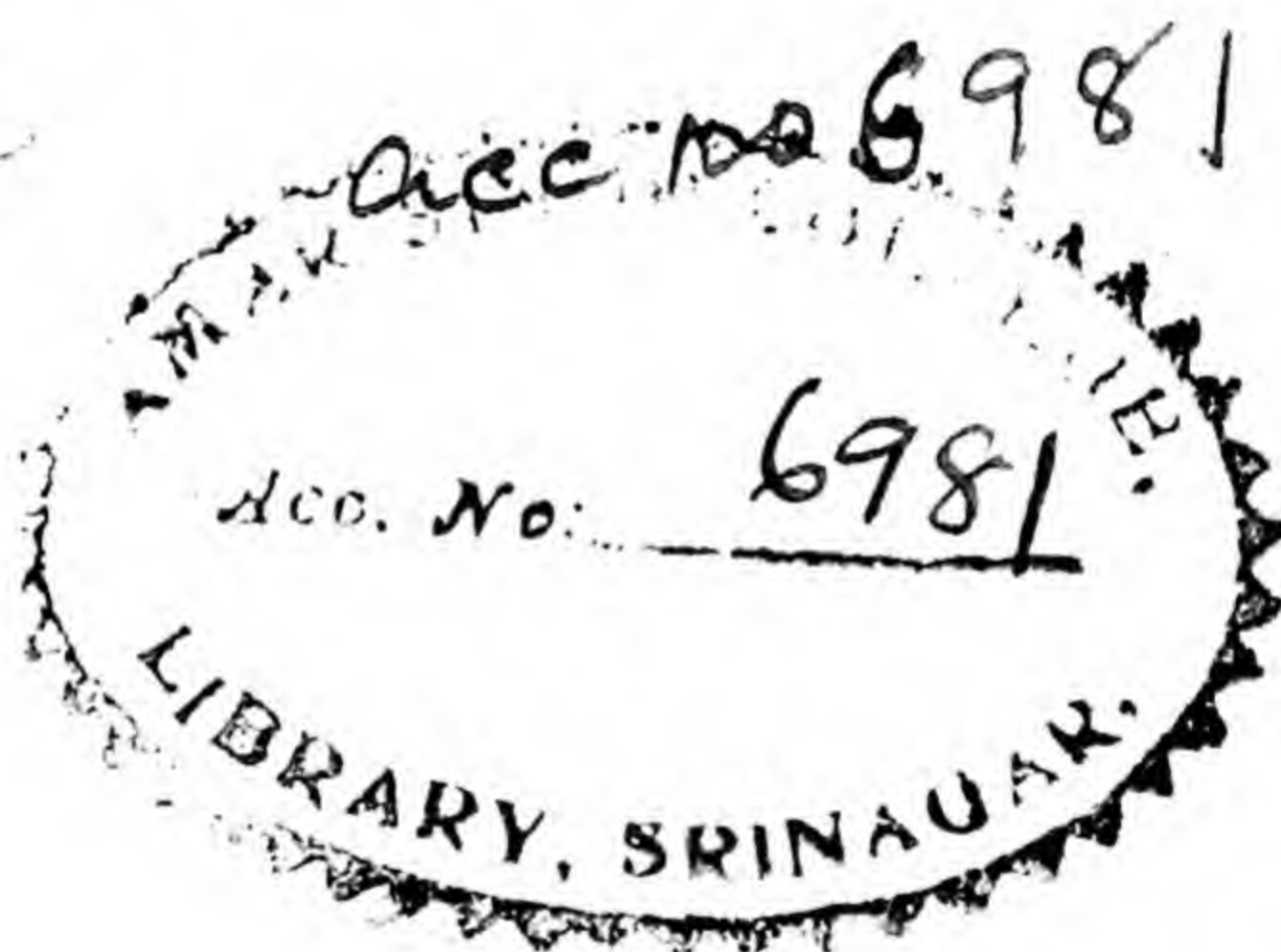
WALT WHITMAN

NEW AND COMPREHENSIVE EDITION
EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,
BY EMORY HOLLOWAY

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WHITMAN'S published books and collected writings: *Leaves of Grass*, 1855; later editions, most of which incorporate smaller collections separately published, 1856, 1860-1, 1867, 1871, 1872, 1876, 1881-2, 1882 (author's), 1881 (two London editions), 1884 (Glasgow), 1889, 1891-2, 1897, 1900, 1917, 1919 (facsimile first edition), 1924 (inclusive), 1939 (facsimile); also numerous reprints, selections, translations and illustrated editions, *Leaves of Grass, Imprints*, containing self-reviews, 1860. *Walt Whitman's Drum Taps*, 1865. *Poems by Walt Whitman*, selected and edited by W. M. Rossetti, London, 1868. *Passage to India, Leaves of Grass*, 1871. *After All Not to Create Only*, 1871. *Democratic Vistas*, 1871. *As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free and Other Poems*, 1872. *Memoranda During the War*, 1875. *Two Rivulets, Prose and Verse*, issued with 1876 (centennial) edition of *Leaves of Grass*, 1876. *Specimen Days and Collect*, 1882. *Leaves of Grass*, selection by E. Rhys, London, 1886. *Specimen Days in America*, revised, London, 1887. *November Boughs*, 1888. *Democratic Vistas and Other Papers*, 1888. *Complete Poems and Prose of Walt Whitman, 1855-88*, 1888. *Good-Bye My Fancy*, 1891. *Complete Prose Works*, 1892; also 1898, 1908, 1914. *Calamus*, letters to Pete Doyle, 1897. *The Wound-Dresser*, letters to his mother, 1898. *Notes and Fragments*, manuscripts edited by Dr. R. M. Bucke, 1899. *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman*, 10 vols., variorum readings and biographical and critical material, issued by Whitman's literary executors, 1902. *An American Primer*, manuscript notes for lecture on American diction, 1904. *Diary in Canada*, 1904. *Lafayette in Brooklyn*, 1904. *Criticism, An Essay*, 1913. *The Gathering of the Forces*, contributions to the *Brooklyn Eagle* edited by C. Rodgers and J. Black, 2 vols., 1920. *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman*, 2 vols., collected and edited by E. Holloway, 1921. *Short Stories by Walt Whitman*, collected and edited by T. O. Mabbott, 1927. *Walt Whitman's Workshop*, manuscripts edited by C. J. Furness, 1928. *Franklin Evans; or the Inebriate*, a magazine dime novel of 1842 edited by E. Holloway, 1929. *A Childhood Reminiscence*, edited by T. M. Mabbott and R. G. Silver, 1930. *I Sit and Look Out*, editorials in *Brooklyn Times*, edited by E. Holloway and V. Schwarz, 1932. *Walt Whitman and the Civil War*, wartime manuscripts and articles

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The present edition contains all the poems in *Leaves of Grass* as Whitman completed it just before his death, and also all but a few of the minor poems posthumously added in the group 'Old Age Echoes.' The text follows Whitman's own peculiarities in spelling and punctuation. The notes are intended primarily for use in schools or for readers in countries other than the United States.

INTRODUCTION

'WHITMAN is apparently the greatest democrat the world has seen,' wrote Henry David Thoreau after reading *Leaves of Grass* and visiting its author in 1855. Certainly among democratic poets there is not another of his stature. More radical writers there have been, in perennial plenty, but none has so passionately preached the democratic virtues of liberty, fraternity, and equality as guides in the making of the self-reliant modern man and in the planning of a protective, as opposed to a paternalistic or leviathan, state. None has been so faithful to the freedoms essential to growth, as distinguished from the forms, the enactments, and the chosen leaders of government. With the triumph of the democratic ideal, new significance will attach to such a poet, in his own land and in all lands. As a historical and prophetic interpretation of democracy, and as the poetic autobiography of a specimen product of that culture, *Leaves of Grass* is, as its author declared, 'a nation announcing itself.'

I heard that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle the
New World,
And to define America, her athletic Democracy,
Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in them what
you wanted.

Horace Traubel recorded, in the earlier *Everyman* edition of the *Leaves*, that when Whitman was asked whether he expected his book to live, he admitted that in certain moods he had had his doubts, but he added: 'Then other moods intervene in which I have a feeling of something in me, in the *Leaves*, that is vital—that may live: something not exactly mine but spoken through me that must outlast me: something not owed to my ego but having a race quality, fitting in with the struggle of democracy in our time to free itself from the clutter of the past.' It was this inspired and inspirational quality that led his early biographers, Bucke and Burroughs, to call his book 'the Bible of Democracy.' He himself, in projecting the work, called it 'the New Bible.' This emphasizes the religious, life-changing character of his creation; but the term is unfortunate for those to whom the word 'Bible' carries with it connotations of received authority or vicarious experience. Rather his book is simply the testimony of a brave and loving man's faith

in himself and his fellows, for to Whitman democracy means a slow growth from within. His poetry, like his concept of the strong man, is then 'a summons and a challenge,' even when it most abounds in beauty. It is this element of his strength that suffers least in translation—a reflection that would please him, for his aspiration was less to fashion the literature of pleasure than to create the literature of power.

He believed himself to be what he called a 'divine literatus,' prophetic rather than sacerdotal in his function; but by what authority did he thus claim to be the spokesman for democracy? Because he himself meets the test which, in *By Blue Ontario's Shore*, he propounds to would-be American poets:

Who are you indeed who would talk or sing to America?

Have you studied out the land, its idioms and men?

Have you learn'd the physiology, phrenology, politics, geography, pride, freedom, friendship of the land? its substratums and objects?

Have you considered the organic compact of the first day of the first year of Independence, sign'd by the Commissioners, ratified by the States, and read by Washington at the head of the army?

Have you possess'd yourself of the Federal Constitution?

Do you see who have left all feudal processes and poems behind them, and assumed the poems and processes of Democracy?

Are you faithful to things? do you teach what the land and sea, the bodies of men, womanhood, amateness, heroic angers, teach?

Have you sped through fleeting customs, popularities?

Can you hold your hand against all seductions, follies, whirls, fierce contentions? are you very strong? are you really of the whole People?

Are you not of some coterie? some school or mere religion?

Are you done with reviews and criticisms of life? animating now to life itself?

It is not difficult to discover limitations in Whitman's preparation to be the uncrowned poet laureate of democracy. His birth in a lower middle-class family of small education gave him no advantages of entrée or of prestige. Though two of his brothers distinguished themselves, one in engineering and the other in the army and in business, there were other children who were as marked by personal and social failure. He himself had no schooling beyond the age of twelve. He made one long and significant journey, to New Orleans, in his young manhood, in old age another to Colorado, and a third to the Saguenay River in Canada; but there were whole regions, such as the Far West, that he knew only through reading,

moving in vast masses.' There he learned to know all types, the Bohemian literati, the journalists and politicians, the ferry-boat pilots and stage-coach drivers, the artists, publishers, and even the outcasts. The power of society when marching toward a common goal was likewise impressed upon him by his contact with the armies, in field and hospital. Of them he wrote the truest and most sympathetic record that we have, whether in prose or verse. But in America democracy does not mean mere group regimentation or convention, and Whitman was equally at home wandering over his native Long Island, studying 'powerful uneducated persons' in social environments of their own making, or alone reading Homer and other great books within the sound of that sea whose irregular rhythms he sought to catch in his own free verse. He was a man not committed, even to the making of a living in the usual ways. Whether he edited a Free-Soil newspaper or assisted his father in building cheap houses, taught country schools, dabbled in politics, or performed routine duties as a government clerk, his one consuming ambition was to be the Columbus of American poetry.

The urge, the ardor, the unconquerable will,
The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words,
A message from the Heavens whispering to me even in sleep,
These sped me on.

Emerson had prepared the way with his call for a people's poet, to be the eye and tongue of the universal Over-Soul; Carlyle had pictured the power of the hero-prophet in letters; and even George Sand had suggested the role of one who should be humanity's voice. It remained for such seed to fall into the prepared ground of a mind like Whitman's, which had absorbed his country as affectionately as he hoped in time to be himself absorbed. The result was a strangely vital collection of poems which can be carried in a soldier's knapsack, consulted by plenipotentiaries at a peace table, or read by working men, nature lovers, artists, and all who are still young in spirit. He carries in his very presence the 'plenum of proof,' and much garnered wisdom besides. But most he steadies us by his calm assurance that his 'foothold is tenon'd and mortised in granite,' and his consequent acceptance of other men and women, each in his own right, each in his deserved degree. Mankind to-day lacks not so much an established authority as a deep faith like his; the lack of it is what requires and gives opportunity to dictatorship.

As I stand aloof and look there is to me something profoundly affecting in large masses of men following the lead of those who do not believe in men.

in changing local customs and institutions, Whitman thought, should be carried to the point of attacking slavery only when the South's 'peculiar institution' sought to expand into the national domain. Abolition, when it finally came, was a military measure taken during a civil war which was testing, not whether man should hold property in man (though that question supplied emotional drives for the struggle), but whether 'any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.'

Whitman was the product of such ideas as these, and as a writer he sought to clarify, vitalize, and extend them. Individual self-reliance he would use as the building-stone for a free society—a stone which totalitarian architects reject in favour of the prefabricated house. But he also sees man as the friend of man, a social and potentially a just individual, capable of building what he calls 'the city of friends.'

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.

Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to depend on themselves,

There the great city stands.

This ideal individual is no recluse. Much as he enjoys solitude in the presence of nature, he is yet willing to dedicate everything that he has to the preservation of liberty, peace, and law. Thus Whitman is not only a staunch individualist, but also the protector of the family, the poet of patriotism, and the far-sighted prophet of an organized world.

As democracy seen from partial and immediate points of view often appears wasteful, unworkable, and even contrary to nature, so a little reading of Whitman sometimes proves misleading. But no one can read him through, with open and sympathetic mind, without discovering in his words a positive force, wholesome as nature. A poet lives intensely, finding things worthy of emotional record in those experiences which most readers, until nudged by the poet, are likely to treat as unconsidered trifles. This he can do only because his own life is not a patchwork of fragments, or a purposeless floundering among sensations, but something organic and unitary. One way to test the quality of a poet is first to see him whole, in light and shade, standing far enough away to perceive the true harmony of his parts, which only when seen from some distance begin to approximate the proportions and magnitudes which are familiar to the average man. Then, satisfied that he is

closely until the meaning and method appear. Much will depend upon our ability to match the thought and mood of the builder with kindred thoughts and moods of our own.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it.
(Did you think it was in the white or grey stone? or the lines of the arches and cornices?)

As our national union rests upon the smaller units of self-government, so the basis of Whitman's philosophy is the individual man or woman. The belief that an individual can be formed in freedom so as to be himself 'as superb as a nation when he has the qualities that make a superb nation' is one of Whitman's central themes, from which stem his social and international doctrines. In presenting the qualities which his democratic hero, the 'average man,' should possess, Whitman uses himself as an illustration (rather than as a model) in *Starting from Paumanok* and especially in *Song of Myself*, two poems which constitute the nave of the cathedral. He does this partly because, like Lincoln, he has had only an average opportunity, though he has made a good deal of it. Besides he knows no other individual so thoroughly. He thinks of personal identity, not as the accretion of unusual experiences, the differences in which constitute the uniqueness of unimaginative biographies, but as the development of each soul through its vital, perceptive response to the common experiences of the race.

I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had received identity by my body.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight
me,

Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

Moreover if, as he insists, his purpose is religious, then his democratic gospel can escape intellectual creed-worship on the one hand and institutional formalism on the other by the subjective method of presenting experience. Incidentally, such a method makes fullest use of his poetic talents, which are lyrical rather than dramatic or epic. And it is congenial to the Quaker's preoccupation with the inner life. De Tocqueville had predicted that in America the levelling tendencies which made men so much alike in outward activities and in social station, militating against the formation of any aristocratic class, would force poets to seek their values in the realm of personality. The apparent egotism which to a nation trained in Puritan humility seemed obnoxious when the book first appeared becomes, thus, a representative egotism, and therefore no egotism at all but a kind of human pride.

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands,
they are not original with me,
If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next
to nothing.

By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their
counterpart of on the same terms.

He is individualistic enough to worship no man or man-made thing, but, reverencing the laws whereby mankind has risen out of dust as he respects the law of gravitation, he can stand 'aplomb in the midst of irrational things.' As we begin the book this is our first, our fundamental impression. How good birth, home life, the exercise of senses and faculties, the enjoyment of nature, contact with all manner of men in their homely occupations, the effect of reading when one does not read too much, the lift of a not-too-ballasted imagination—how, in short, such influences have 'cohered' a man 'out of chaos' and attested his worth to himself by the very sanity of his soul and the magnetism of his presence—this is the nave of the cathedral. In the transept we have the beginning of man in society and the differing services of love and friendship in advancing the individual to full self-realization and social usefulness. On one side is the love of man for woman, as a woman; on the other, the attraction of man for other persons, stripped of the temporal conditions which limit sexual love to a single predestined cycle. But neither love nor friendship as the terms are commonly used in poetry is quite the word to describe the relationships which Whitman here builds into his epic conception.

The 'Children of Adam' poems, as the group title suggests, are concerned primarily with the generation of a race, and with the individual contacts and emotions incident thereto. Read separately, or by persons who are strangers to the experiences described, or by those who have never been moved by the thought that they are themselves links in the endless chain of human life, these poems sometimes disgust by the outspokenness with which they challenged the pruriency which in nineteenth-century America passed for modesty. And indeed they make no claim to being either modest or immodest. Without reticence, and sometimes without artistic effectiveness, they certainly are. But modern readers of naturalistic fiction are more likely to see in them studies of sex emotion as interpreted by the artist: the personal magnetism of a man for a woman, the place of the sense of touch

in the education of the soul, the function of the imagination and the sentiments in freeing and enriching this relation, sex as a source of personal pride and artistic power—these are all touched upon in this group of poems.

Sex contains all, bodies, souls,
Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,
Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the
seminal milk,
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves,
beauties, delights of the earth,
All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the earth,
These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and justifications of
itself.

But Whitman's controlling conception, as Burroughs pointed out, is his dream of a New Adam, progenitor of a new race. Despite the language wherewith he seeks to convey the *abandon* of romantic emotion, he is not drunkenly lost in the pleasures of mere sensation, though he considers the human body divine and its functions nothing of which to be ashamed; rather he is thinking far ahead for the human race. When in 'Children of Adam' Whitman attacks slavery it is because one can never tell what greatness may yet emerge from those now in bondage. The significance of his historical and mystical viewpoint appears whenever an attempt is made to hitch his star to the reform wagon of some impatient group. Though encouraging the restless spirit behind all social improvement, he had learned to divorce himself from particular reforms, in order that by creating the image of a triumphant modern man he might strike at the root of all human evils. Even democracy, as a form of government, he looked upon as an unfinished experiment. The concentrated energy which achieves needed social change by taking advantage of opportune occasion is, by the law of compensation, relatively short-sighted. It was easier for Garrison to arouse zeal for the abolition of southern slavery than for Emerson to interest the masses in a self-reliance that would make each man the master of himself. Yet who would say that Emerson's mind has in the long run not contributed more to the cause of human liberty than has Garrison's heart? Reformers of the Garrison type naturally prefer to experiment with conditions which they can hope to place under control within the life expectancy of laws, slogans, movements. And there is no doubt that our newer sciences have proved that much can be accomplished by altering mental and social environment. Yet even the most materialistic naturalists include heredity with environment as a factor in evolution. With all his political liberalism and his praise of industrial progress, Whitman never forgets the importance

of being well born. Eugenics had not even received a name until Whitman's work was practically done, but he had long stressed the need of a 'sane paternity.' He saw the greatest promise of America in the West, where sexual selection was relatively unhampered. He insisted upon health, not only for its own sake, but for that of posterity.

Bravas to all impulses sending sane children to the next age!
But damn that which spends itself with no thought of the stain,
pains, dismay, feebleness, it is bequeathing.

Eugenics is a science one hears of more in Fascist than in Communist countries; but only in a democracy will it ever be safe. Whitman makes his appeal to the responsibility of the individual, in the name of his unborn successors. He is the more persuasive because he trusts nature, and believes that only by realizing himself fully, in emotions as well as in thought, can the individual become 'an acme of things accomplish'd, encloser of things to be.' The New Adam says to the New Eve,

In you I wrap a thousand onward years,

but his imagination thus reinforces and justifies his emotion only because he has first discovered the transcendent importance of both personalities. If, with the slow adjustment of national prejudices to the concept of an organic world society, eugenics should become an important science, then Whitman must be reckoned its true prophet. 'Will the time hasten when fatherhood and motherhood shall become a science—and the noblest science?' he asks.

Let us turn now to the other wing of the transept, that represented by the somewhat esoteric group of 'Calamus' poems. Some who have thought Whitman emotionally abnormal have affirmed, largely on the basis of their reading of the poems themselves, that here lies the real clue to his whole psychology. Such critics assume that the preceding group was written neither from experience nor genuine inspiration but were manufactured to balance his general design, since the love of woman is obviously important in the life-history of the average man. However, by first passing into that wing of the transept which is devoted to the love which is based on sex, we have taken the initial step in the gradual expansion of the poet's thought, an expansion which will ultimately compass time and space, and in its catholic affection and hope embrace all the peoples of the earth. Whitman learned much from Emerson, but what he learned he made his own. In the essay on *Love* Emerson had treated romantic love as a school of the affections, designed by nature not to bind person to particular person by hoops of obligation or habit, but inductively to lead the lover to a sharing of all superior minds through comprehension of their

dynamic ideas and ideals. This is rather too coldly intellectual for Whitman, though he can himself be almost scientifically detached in dealing with eugenics; besides it does not fit into his plan of appealing to and through the emotions of the reader by dramatizing typical human moments. Therefore he first gives us 'Children of Adam'; but when we cross to the 'Calamus' wing of the transept we are following Emerson's Platonic path.

Whitman's gospel of friendship is not based on sex, even though, as in much religious literature, sexual terms may be employed in indicating the nature of its vital function. His 'friends' are not limited in number.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies.

Except when it takes a morbidly selfish and possessive turn, as it sometimes does, Whitman's friendship is kept pure by its very promiscuity, whereas the love for woman would thereby be prostituted. It is an 'etherial,' a 'disembodied' love. It may even cross sex lines without becoming sexual, for Whitman biography records a number of his exalted friendships with women, such as Helen Price, Mrs. W. D. O'Connor, and Anne Gilchrist. Whatever the psychological origin of this doctrine of comradeship, the poet considers it something natural enough to be the 'base of all metaphysics,' underlying church and state and other social institutions. Sufficiently widespread, it becomes the basis of all tolerance, the firmest cement of a state or a world. Voters do not go to the polls with their arms about each other's necks; but if they went with knives behind each other's backs they would make of politics only another pattern for war. As Whitman uses the idea, it depends less upon gestures of personal fondness (though he does at times over-use the caress) than upon an ability to see in others that which is worthy of affection and trust. To Whitman, with his highly developed capacity for love, this may in theory mean little more than one's birthright as a human being, however little his race or education or talents might recommend him for intellectual intercourse or aesthetic sympathy. He has a kind word for all the outcasts and felons of the world, and he once said that if he were to write the *Leaves of Grass* again he would express more sympathy for the sinful and unfortunate. From this point of view, which after all is a Christian one, it matters little, save in the expression given to it, whether such universal sympathy was or was not the result of Freudian sublimation through art. And as to the expression given to it, it should be noted that much is presented, not as a personal confession, but as a dreamlike wish-fulfilment. At times, too, he uses symbolical language, as when in speaking of

himself he is really speaking of his book and its influence. 'Thus his art is nature—his own life—passed through the alembic of his purifying purpose. The warmth of his affection is not diminished when he addresses men in foreign lands or future ages. Such warmth will not be so suspect in every country as its accent of sentimentality has made it in Puritan and pioneer America. His 'superb friendship' is 'exalté, previously unknown'; and hence he is entitled to resent the imputation that it was a return to the friendship of the decadent days of ancient Greece. Much less is it a Nordic feeling of superiority based on race or party. Perhaps it is most like that sense of belonging which, as stress of war replaces that of economic competition, the armed youth of a whole nation feel. The Civil War, at any rate, clarified and spiritualized the conception for Whitman. That this is the emphasis he would have the reader place upon these much disputed poems is shown, I think, in the arrangement of what follows. It is not accidental that the next poem is *Salut au Monde*, a friendly affirmation of the solidarity of the human race.

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination around the
whole earth,
I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them ready for me
in all lands,
I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them.

Here, at last, we approach the altar of the cathedral. Whitman's is a religion of humanity. He is no systematic philosopher. He is unacquainted with statecraft, and but poorly read in history. He commits himself to no partial reform, only to the slow, sure reform of individuals themselves.

Produce great persons, the rest follows.

But his vision of mankind as a single race, however backward some of its members, and his fervent championship of its rights and potentialities, is his great contribution to a world at strife with itself. A 'time straying toward infidelity and confections and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith.' When in shouting his 'salut' to the whole world in the name of democracy he comes to the 'wooly-haired hordes' of Hottentots 'with clicking palates' or human forms with 'the fathomless ever-impressive countenances of brutes,' he does not patronize them as lesser breeds without the law, but affirms:

I do not prefer others so very much before you either,
I do not say one word against you, away back there where you
stand,

(You will come forward in due time to my side.)

He is realist enough to note actual differences in growth and

attainment. He has not forgotten his pride in America as the culmination of a long line of 'antecedents.' But precisely because some races have made great progress from small beginnings, he entertains hope for all races, given 'the amplitude of time.'

Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you could trace back through the centuries?

To suppose that the 'divine rapport' which from his mystical point of view has equalized him with all other men has therefore destroyed those distinctions which supply incentive for human effort and indicate the achievement of individuals who have made much of their heritage, would be to forget the nave of the cathedral through which we have passed, and the whole evolutionary philosophy which furnished the ground for Whitman's optimism. He hastens to add, as his next long poem, the *Song of the Open Road*, developing the idea that while there is, or should be, before every human being an open democratic road leading to better things, on that road the 'great companions' are those individuals who have a proper sense of human values and who have, at great cost of effort and faith, achieved a self-reliance which is itself 'good fortune.' Few of Whitman's poems, not even his *Song of Joys*, breathe such courage and gladness in the realization of unexpended power. Here the individual is a young god. To him appearances bow, institutions give way, and the sky o'erarches a world of opportunity and plenty. He is like Whitman's spreading live-oak tree, hospitable, protective, silent, assured, yet by its very completeness keeping other trees at a certain distance. There is nothing vicarious in this poet's service to humanity, only the inspiration of a successful example. 'Wisdom cannot be passed,' he says, 'from one having it to another not having it,' nor can any one, or any society, live the life of another. On the Open Road, the Great Companion says:

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from
the woods,
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
My left hand hooking you round the waist,
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the
public road.

This road, like the passage to India, girdles the globe, 'leading wherever I choose.' When Whitman comes to think in national terms he will make the application as vigorously to nations also;

yet since 'nothing endures but personal qualities,' the strength of the nation is to him but the united strength of its many individuals.

Whitman's perception of the unchanging conditions under which personal growth is possible is what makes him our perennial contemporary. Some of his prophecies, as we shall see, had an uncanny accuracy; but he disclaimed any gift of second sight, believing that the true prophet sees that which is deeply hidden rather than that which is dim with distance. And looking deeply into the life of a man or a nation at any given moment, the true prophet naturally becomes aware of forces which, at least for purposes of contrast, must be called evil. Whitman has been accused of a too facile optimism, vestigial mood of a pioneering age that is past. But no one can read his analysis of American politics in the period preceding the Civil War, or the realistic reporting of the callousness and brutality of that war itself along with its heroic patriotism, or the frank confession he makes, in *Democratic Vistas*, of the peculiar weaknesses of democracy, without realizing that he kept his faith by exercising it. To the evolutionist, as Emerson said, 'evil will bless and ice will burn,' and to the Hegelian (as in some measure Whitman professed himself to be) eternal conflict is the school of self-realization. So Whitman does not scruple to be the poet of imperfection also, understood in this relative sense. Justified and revengeful revolt finds a place in his 'square deific,' being itself at times the preserver of important values. And in *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry* he makes a frank acknowledgment of all the evil tendencies in himself—this long before Freud had pointed out the dynamics of suppressed desires. But if there were, in his slow growth to manhood from the confused emotionalism of his youth, some periods of imbalance and unwholesome groping for unfruitful love, we can see in the poems I have just mentioned what he was able to make of them. Aplomb and at ease he stands, whether in the presence of the 'self-contained' animals, of men great or humble, or of those stars which the astronomers never see.

Emerson's ideal poet is the Namer, the Sayer, the Interpreter of man and nature. Whitman's is less pedagogical but more sympathetic. He is the Answerer, one who has learned from living widely and deeply 'the pass-key of hearts.' He is no mere entertainer shaping clever words with art for art's sake, though his most enduring poems may well prove to be those in which his art is greatest; he is the 'august master of beauty' because to him beauty is less an end in itself than a by-product of nature. His poems

. . . balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes,
They do not seek beauty, they are sought,
Forever touching them or close upon them follows beauty,
longing, fain, love-sick.

Such a poet will look out upon a world of his own, his own because his personal reaction to it will have made him what he is. To him his country will be what he has seen and read about and loved in its landscape, its people, its history. In *Our Old Feuillage* Whitman gives us glimpses into his own mental photograph album. This is by way of reminding the reader, for whom no worthy poem is ever really finished by the poet, to make his own *Ballad for Americans*.

How can I but as here chanting, invite you for yourself to collect bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of these States?

War and modern inventions will doubtless hasten the time when well-read and well-travelled citizens of the world, and those who enjoy radio, television, and moving pictures, will do this for their expanding homeland; but with Whitman internationalism always means, as in America nationalism has meant, the full fruition of many localisms.

The purpose of our survey, thus far, has been to try to do for the reader unaccustomed to Whitman's novelty of form and matter what he himself seeks to do for travellers upon the Open Road—to show the path, the direction, the manner and spirit in which one is to travel further. To discover for himself new beauties and new braveries by the way is the right of each reader. But as Whitman passes from the idea of the 'simple, separate person' to the grand if hazy conception of humanity 'en-masse' he provokes two questions. Is nationalism by-passed entirely in the process as being, after all, a comparatively recent and perhaps a dispensable institution? And how does one make such a transition without taking leave of realities, whether by way of oriental mysticism or of occidental humanitarianism? His answer to these questions will, I hope, be suggested by a rapid tracing of Whitman's evolving attitude toward war.

If before he died Whitman outgrew the typical nineteenth-century conception of nationalism, it was because he had learned to extend, rather than because he had renounced, the principles which had made America great. An internationalism based on a religion of humanity which denied all lesser loyalties would have seemed to him unrooted and insincere. It is true that nationalistic policies like the tariff he always objected to as harmful to the 'idea of the race family, of international unity, of making one country of all countries.' But Whitman's whole political thinking went back to the sound, if sentimental, indoctrination in patriotism which he had received as a child.

His grandfather and an uncle of his grandmother had been prisoners during the Revolution, the latter suffering on the prison ships which, like Freneau, Whitman was later to describe in terms

of indignation. Another relative fell in Washington's poorly planned battle of Brooklyn. At five Walt had a momentary but unforgettable contact with Lafayette himself. At twelve or thirteen he was learning to set type under the tutelage of a man who had seen many of the great figures of the early republic, listening 'with a boy's ardent soul and eager ears' to tales told of that heroic age. In Whitman's youthful contributions to magazines and newspapers Washington was always to him a leader without fear and without reproach, and his tattered soldiers 'a Sacred Army.'

The war of 1812 left little impression on Whitman. It was not much of a war, and he was not born until 1819; but his uncles served in it and he had a great admiration for its hero, Andrew Jackson. Likewise he had little contact with the Texan War of Independence, though his story of the massacre at Goliad (in *Song of Myself*) seems to have predisposed him to take a prejudiced view of our war with Mexico when it came. At that time he was the twenty-seven-year-old editor of the Brooklyn *Eagle*, a Democratic-Republican paper supporting Polk. In this pro-slavery war, it must be admitted, Whitman was as much a jingo as the rest of his party. While Lowell was scoring hits with his anti-war *Biglow Papers*, Whitman looked upon such propaganda as a disloyal defamation of the President. The pro-war propaganda of his own editorials dealt less with specific causes of the conflict than with general allusions to the many affronts to our national honour which called for chastisement.

Who has read the sickening story of those wholesale brutal murders, so useless for any purpose except gratifying the cowardly appetite of a nation of bravos, willing to shoot down men by the hundreds in cold blood—without panting for the day when the prayer of that blood should be listened to—when the vengeance of a retributive God should be meted out to those who so ruthlessly and needlessly slaughtered His image?

Repeated successes for American arms gradually slaked his thirst for revenge; Mexico had been punished enough—or rather she would be when we should have indemnified ourselves with much of her territory. For the youthful Whitman was an imperialist, entertaining dreams of acquiring both Canada and Mexico. It was the manifest destiny of his country. Like a twentieth-century German, he rationalized such robbery in the name of culture—only, to make it worse, his was a democratic culture.

What has Mexico, inefficient Mexico—with her superstition, her burlesque upon freedom, her actual tyranny by the few over the many—what has she to do with the great mission of peopling

the new world with a noble race? Be it ours to achieve that mission.

To increase the irony, he even invoked the Christian religion to justify the harsh terms of peace:

For our part, we look upon the increase of territory and power—not as the doubter looks—but with the faith which the Christian has in God's mystery.

Certainly God must have moved in a mysterious way to perform the wonder of transforming such a democrat into a humane internationalist; yet that is just what happened to Whitman in the hard school of the Civil War.

When, in 1848, short-lived republics were being set up in France, Italy, and Germany, he had written *Europe* to encourage the oppressed in those lands. But it was our own internecine struggle that brought the issue home to him and finally gave him a liberal conception of the use of force in human affairs. In old age he is reported to have said, remembering this conflict:

O God! that whole damned war business is about nine hundred and ninety-nine parts diarrhoea to one part glory: the people who like the wars should be compelled to fight the wars: they are hellish business, wars—all wars. Sherman said, War is hell: so it is: any honest man says so—hates wars, fighting, blood-letting: I was in the midst of it all—saw war where war is worst—not on the battlefields, no—in the hospitals: there war is worst: there I mixed with it; and now I say, God damn the wars—all wars.

Democracy is devoted to peace and Whitman is a democrat, yet, on a moment's reflection, he thought this outburst an unfair statement of American pacifism. 'I shouldn't have let myself go—no, I shouldn't—but I say God damn them anyway!' So he is reported by Traubel, the Marxist, in a style that sounds more like the reporter than the poet. But there were times when he himself, in the midst of his hospital visits, wrote letters home to his mother in an equally sad and discouraged vein.

Yet he did keep on, serving the soldiers, Northern and Southern alike; his brother George repeatedly volunteered, rising to a lieutenant-colonelcy through his bravery; and Lincoln's unflinching courage won Walt's loyalty and love. He carried on because his life work was at stake. The South was dear to him, but if a local government could not expand into new territory without destroying the freedom of other localities, or if the individual must become ruthless in order to be rugged, there could be little hope in the gospel he had preached with so much joy. He could not

escape, like another Quaker poet, to write charming idylls of the snow; he must help decide whether a nation like ours could survive. As Sir Norman Angell has put the issue, with reference to contemporary post-war planning: 'There are circumstances in which authority and power alone can give freedom, and when force alone can save democracy—as Lincoln knew when he temporarily defied the principle that government must derive its authority from the consent of the governed to enforce a union which free consent could not secure.' It was for freedom in this national sense that Whitman supported the war, and became its major poet.

When the first gun spoke, it was to Whitman a flash of lightning electrifying the oppressive murk of a low-hanging sky. He had felt the years 'trembling and reeling' beneath him, as second-rate politicians strove by short-sighted appeasement to avoid coming to grips with the irrepressible conflict of issues and interests. His relief and exultation are recorded in such poems as *Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps*. But the arrogance of his pride in the green armies marching forth to war wears off as battles are lost, security is imperilled, domestic life is disrupted, more and more mutilated young bodies lie waiting for the ministrations of his hands, and his own brother lies starving in a Southern prison. There was much discouragement and some defeatism in the North after the first battle of Bull Run. Whitman blamed this debacle, not on the average soldier, but on his incompetent and undemocratic officers. Remembering the boast he had made for the great poet, 'In time of war he is the most deadly force of the war,' he sat down to write *Beat! Beat! Drums!* as a recruiting poem. And in *Song of the Banner at Daybreak* he asserted the rightful claim of one's country in her time of need.

When he visited the front to attend his wounded brother he composed a number of the 'Drum-Taps' poems, recording picturesque or pathetic scenes he had observed. Not till long after the war did he celebrate in verse a single military leader. Even when Lincoln was slain and Whitman wrote his immortal dirge in *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*, he dedicated the poem as much to all the dead soldiers whom Lincoln had led. Of these 'the bravest press'd to the front and fell, unnamed, unknown.' Thus Whitman anticipated history in celebrating the Unknown Soldier. Nor did he forget the terrible impact of war upon the homes whence the young soldiers came. *Come Up from the Fields Father* was probably composed after Whitman had written a letter to such a home preparing them for the imminent death of their son, Oscar Cunningham, of Ohio. Living close to death, the poet is able to retain his faith that 'it is as lucky to die as to be born,' since death also is a birth. And when the strife of brothers ended and Whitman sounded the sweet Lincolnian note of *Reconciliation*,

he did not forget the tremendous cost of the war, but, like Lincoln, vowed that 'these dead shall not have died in vain.'

They had not died in vain so far as Whitman, the poet of nationality, was concerned, for they gave him two controlling ideas. The first was the sovereignty of the Union over all its members, as the only 'palladium' of their liberty. The nation could not exist half slave and half free, any more than our modern world can exist half democratic and half totalitarian. The second idea was that of a union which did not depend upon constitutional interpretations or anything which could be set down on parchment by lawyers or legislators, but was rather a 'compact organism.'

Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?

Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?

Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.

In human kindness, whether binding the wounds of a fallen soldier or sharing the ideal for which he fell, Whitman now finds a principle of national cohesion, the real meaning of his gospel of friendship, a gospel which can without offence to true nationality be extended to national neighbours.

But the irrepressible conflict also is extended throughout the world. Sooner or later, Whitman foresaw, a civil war of the world would have to be fought on this issue.

For the prize I see at issue at last is the world.

This would be hastened by the inevitable shrinkage of the globe due to modern inventions as well as by the unrest spread with democratic ideas.

What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of you, passing under the seas?

Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one heart to the globe?

Is humanity forming en-masse? for lo, tyrants tremble, crowns grow dim,

The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a general divine war.

Thus in *Years of the Modern* could Whitman, by looking deeply into the war just finished, foresee, as in a trance, World Wars I and II. He puts his finger squarely upon the issue and all but names some of President Wilson's 'fourteen points.' No longer does he seek to extend the rule of his own country as a 'messiah' nation by the sword; but he does see that in the laboratory of our national life certain experiments have been made which have

rigorously tested democracy's ability to survive and to develop, and the results of this experience he now offers in friendship to other nations.

John Stuart Mill, in his great essay on liberty, 'demands two main constituents, or substrata, for a truly great nationality—first, a large variety of character—and second, full play for human nature to expand in numberless and even conflicting directions'; with this citation of high authority Whitman opens his own searching analysis of democracy. If we may follow the suggestion of *Years of the Modern* quoted in the last paragraph, the reasoning of *Democratic Vistas* may be applied also to the society of nations. In the group of poems called 'Birds of Passage' Whitman introduces themes which render him immune to any charge of provincialism. *Song of the Universal* lists Platonic ideas in terms of evolution, ideas which are slowly emerging from the 'measureless grossness and the slag' but which are valid only in so far as they are universal. In the quest of the 'bird uncaught' ours has been a race of pioneers, hardy and daring. But this questing spirit has moved on many planes of action, individual and national, material and spiritual. *Passage to India*, which Whitman called the 'keystone of my democracy's enduring arch,' is, in one sense, an occasional poem celebrating the simultaneous opening of the Suez Canal and the Pacific railroad, together marking the completion of that path which bold explorers and patient engineers had made around the earth. With the disappearance of the frontier, however, pioneering does not end. All that a race of pioneers has achieved, in conquering a continent and opening homesteads to its polyglot peoples, is but a preparation for new conquests of the mind. Whitman drew much of his inspiration from science, whose 'absolute fiats' he acknowledged. But he declared that to the poet the soul 'towered high above all science.' That is, there are realms of experience which science has not yet explored and which, with its commitment to exact methods of measurement, it is perhaps not equipped ever to explore. Moreover, only man's moral nature can rightfully decide what is to be done with the results of scientific experiment, what bought with the gold from El Dorado. Whitman did not share Thoreau's distrust of science, industry, and social organization as enemies of individualism, but he did declare that political freedom, mastery of natural resources, and industrial progress are but necessary first steps toward a leisure in which man may learn to think and to cultivate the aesthetic and social arts.

Ironically, the passage to India has brought the West face to face with the East, so that both are now relative in a new sense. Past and future, backward and forward, have less meaning than they did. The occidental spirit of action has, by its very activity, been

made to confront the oriental spirit of contemplation and introspective self-control. This return to the 'realms of budding bibles' Whitman welcomes, as a needed counterpoise to the eternal busy-ness of a young and restless people. Early in his career he had sought to encourage American originality by warning against the danger of aping the customs, traditions, and aesthetic models of the Old World. But the time came when he thought he could afford to pay his respects to the 'old chants,' to the European, Greek, and Hebrew cultures, and to the British tradition, without which there would have been no Whitman, and no America, as he knew them.

With thee Time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations sink or swim with thee.

In *Passage to India* he perceives that we are but part of a long procession, which has at last returned upon itself in the orient. No great ideology can hope to escape the ossification of its spirit and the institutionalization of its activities unless it rests upon the broad and varied base specified by Mill. Emerson feared that Christianity would deteriorate into mere social reform if it did not go back for some of its inspiration to the original well-springs of mysticism in Germany and Asia. In China and India a compensating influx of western energy has begun to raise the economic and political condition of the masses, so that they too may hope to share the ancient culture which is their birthright. With the dimming of geographical frontiers, the world of to-morrow may be enriched by a freer circulation of the philosophies, the arts, and even the humour of many races, each testing and checking the others. Only democracy, Whitman believed, is fit to govern the world, and democracy can hope to govern it for long only because free government provides for its own constant rejuvenation. On practical as well as idealistic grounds, then, the future history of the world depends upon the triumph of the Four Freedoms.

One may, however, place too great emphasis on Whitman's serious concern with the human soul as a voyager through space and beyond time. That would focus undue attention on the Puritan element in his country's tradition, which he sought to liberalize. Both his Dutch ancestry and his mystical type of mind tend to free him from 'the tyranny of time,' the one by teaching him to find huge satisfaction in mere 'caressing of life wherever flowing,' and the other by revealing that, to deep perception,

There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Read as an avowal of complacency in the presence of the manifold political and economic wrongs that cry for redress, such a passage would place a low ceiling upon human effort; what he really means is that life knows only the present tense. 'Life alone avails,' said his master, 'not the having lived'; Emerson might have added, 'nor the hoping to live.' Thus one learns patience and contentment. The life of the future will be ensured only by careful seed-planting in the present, and great trees mature slowly. Whitman does not feel guilty, therefore, when impelled to seek sources of joy in the report of his senses, basking in sunshine or ocean wave, or in those moods of withdrawal in which he can 'sit and look out' upon the world without assuming personal responsibility for its doings, good or evil.

I lie abstracted and hear beautiful tales of things and the reasons
of things,

They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.

Loafing, he is still 'inviting his soul,' for there is a wisdom to be learned neither in church nor school.

Why, who makes much of a miracle?

As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,

Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,

Or dart my sight over the roofs of the houses toward the sky,

Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge of the
water,

Or stand under trees in the woods,

Or talk by day with any one I love, or sleep in the bed at night
with any one I love,

Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,

Or look at strangers riding opposite me in the car,

Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive of a summer forenoon,

Or animals feeding in the fields,

Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,

Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars so quiet and
bright,

Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in spring;

These, with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,

The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.

Unless such a catalogue evoke from the reader's own experience memories to match the poet's Adamic wonder, it remains only a catalogue. But to see how a single detail in this particular passage stands for a complete poetic experience of his own, consider his parable of the spider:

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to
connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor
hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

Greater love hath no poet than this, that he give his own love of
life to his reader. And in no poet is the spreading love of life
rooted in more perennial things.

The reason Whitman thought that poetry is important to a
democracy, and that only a poetic people could support great
poets, is that to him poetry is a sharing of significant experience.
If, however, following a conventional aesthetics, it seek to present
satisfyingly complete expressions of such experience, it ends by
making parasites of its readers. 'Not so much the book needs to
be the complete thing, but the reader of the book does.' Not
parasites but poets Whitman would have his readers to be. This
he accomplishes, not indeed by assuming—what is palpably false
—that all possess 'the divine power to use words,' but by teaching
them to look with a poet's eye, and to embrace life with a poet's
sympathy and faith. Accordingly he seldom lulls the reader with
repetitious patterns of metre and stanza.

The lyrist's measur'd beat, the wrought-out temple's grace—
column and polish'd arch forgot.

His art is more subtle than that, more suggestive. It demands a
greater collaboration on the part of the reader. Though some of
his greatest poems contain carols of simple lyrical beauty, read as
a whole they reveal the fascinating intricacy of a sonata or a rondo.
More often, however, especially in his early work, Whitman merely
tosses out poetic hints for any reader who has the skill to use them
—daring thoughts, stimulating phrases, the rough sketch for a
picture, a haunting rhythm. This determination to provoke a
creative reaction in the reader accounts, also, for his constant em-
ployment of the second person as though he wrote, not to exhibit
himself, but to enter into intimate conversation with the reader.
He is the Answerer, but first there must be questions. Again and

again he will address 'you, whoever you are up there,' as if his portrait spoke from the opened page. In fact, in his first edition, a shirt-sleeved portrait was his only clear avowal of authorship. Much is thus left for the reader to do, so much indeed that Whitman's fit audience may never be a very popular one. Suggestions must be followed, sweeping generalizations must be vitalized by concrete reference, unaccustomed attitudes must be adopted, subdued music must be heard; but in doing these things the reader becomes himself a poet.

Both in theme and in method, then, Whitman is, as Thoreau said, if not a people's poet, then that rarer thing, the poet of Democracy.

EMORY HOLLOWAY.

QUEENS COLLEGE,
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
BIBLIOGRAPHY	v
INTRODUCTION	vii
<i>INSCRIPTIONS</i>	
One's-Self I Sing	i
As I Ponder'd in Silence	i
In Cabin'd Ships at Sea	2
To Foreign Lands	3
To a Historian	3
To Thee Old Cause	3
Eidólons	4
For Him I Sing	7
When I Read the Book	7
Beginning My Studies	7
Beginners	7
To The States	8
On Journeys through The States	8
To a Certain Cantatrice	8
Me Imperturbe	9
Savantism	9
The Ship Starting	9
I Hear America Singing	10
What Place is Besieged?	10
Still though the One I Sing	10
Shut not Your Doors	10
Poets to Come	11
To You	11
Thou Reader	11
Starting from Paumanok	12
✓ Song of Myself	23
<i>CHILDREN OF ADAM</i>	
To the Garden the World	79
From Pent-up Aching Rivers	79
I Sing the Body Electric	81
A Woman Waits for Me	88
Spontaneous Me	90
One Hour to Madness and Joy	92
Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd	93
Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals	93
We Two, How Long We were Fool'd	93
O Hymen! O Hymene!	94
I am He that Aches with Love	94
Native Moments	95

	PAGE
Once I Pass'd through a Populous City	95
I Heard You Solemn-Sweet Pipes of the Organ	95
Facing West from California's Shores	96
As Adam Early in the Morning.	96

CALAMUS

In Paths Untrodden	97
Scented Herbage of My Breast	97
Whoever You are Holding Me Now in Hand	99
For You O Democracy	101
These I Singing in Spring	101
Not Heaving from my Ribb'd Breast Only	102
Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances	103
The Base of All Metaphysics	104
Recorders Ages Hence	104
When I Heard at the Close of the Day	105
Are You the New Person Drawn toward Me?	106
Roots and Leaves Themselves Alone	106
Not Heat Flames up and Consumes	107
Trickle Drops	107
City of Orgies	108
Behold This Swarthy Face	108
I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing	108
To a Stranger	109
This Moment Yearning and Thoughtful	109
I Hear It was Charged against Me	110
The Prairie-Grass Dividing	110
When I Peruse the Conquer'd Fame	110
We Two Boys together Clinging	111
A Promise to California	111
Here the Frailest Leaves of Me.	112
No Labor-Saving Machine	112
A Glimpse	112
A Leaf for Hand in Hand	112
Earth, My Likeness	113
I Dream'd in a Dream	113
What Think You I Take My Pen in Hand?	113
To the East and to the West	113
Sometimes with One I Love	114
To a Western Boy	114
Fast-Anchor'd Eternal O Love	114
Among the Multitude	114
O You whom I Often and Silently Come	115
That Shadow My Likeness	115
Full of Life Now	115

	PAGE
Salut au Monde!	116
Song of the Open Road	125
Crossing Brooklyn Ferry	135
Song of the Answerer	140
Our Old Feuillage	145
A Song of Joys	150
Song of the Broad-Axe	156
Song of the Exposition	166
Song of the Redwood-Tree	175
A Song for Occupations	179
A Song of the Rolling Earth	186
Youth, Day, Old Age and Night	191

BIRDS OF PASSAGE

Song of the Universal	191
Pioneers! O Pioneers!	193
To You	197
France the 18th Year of These States	199
Myself and Mine	200
Year of Meteors (1859-60)	202
With Antecedents	203
A Broadway Pageant	205

SEA-DRIFT

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking	209
As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life	214
Tears	217
To the Man-of-War-Bird	217
Aboard at a Ship's Helm	218
On the Beach at Night	219
The World Below the Brine	220
On the Beach at Night Alone	220
Song for All Seas, All Ships	221
Patroling Barnegat	222
After the Sea-Ship	222

BY THE ROADSIDE

A Boston Ballad—1854	223
Europe the 72d and 73d Years of These States	225
A Hand-Mirror	227
Gods	227
Germs	228
Thoughts	228

	PAGE
When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer	229
Perfections	229
O Me! O Life!	229
To a President	230
I Sit and Look Out	230
To Rich Givers	230
The Dalliance of the Eagles	231
Roaming in Thought	231
A Farm Picture	231
A Child's Amaze	232
The Runner	232
Beautiful Women	232
Mother and Babe	232
Thought	232
Visor'd	232
Thought	233
Gliding o'er All	233
Hast Never Come to Thee an Hour	233
Thought	233
To Old Age	233
Locations and Times	233
Offerings	234
To the States, To Identify the 16th, 17th or 18th Presidential	234

DRUM-TAPS

First O Songs for a Prelude	234
Eighteen Sixty-One	237
Beat! Beat! Drums!	237
From Paumanok Starting I Fly like a Bird	238
Song of the Banner at Daybreak	239
Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deep	244
Virginia—the West	246
City of Ships	247
The Centenarian's Story	248
Cavalry Crossing a Ford	252
Bivouac on a Mountain Side	252
An Army Corps on the March	253
By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame	253
Come Up from the Fields Father	254
Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night	255
A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown	256
A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim	257
As Toilsome I Wander'd Virginia's Woods	258

Not the Pilot	259
Year that Trembled and Reel'd Beneath Me	259
The Wound-Dresser	259
Long, too Long America	262
Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun	262
Dirge for Two Veterans	264
Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice	265
I Saw Old General at Bay	266
The Artilleryman's Vision	266
Ethiopia Saluting the Colours	267
Not Youth Pertains to Me	268
Race of Veterans	268
World Take Good Notice	268
O Tan-Faced Prairie-Boy	269
Look Down Fair Moon	269
Reconciliation.	269
How Solemn as One by One	269
As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap Camerado	270
Delicate Cluster	270
To a Certain Civilian	271
Lo, Victress on the Peaks	271
Spirit whose Work is Done	272
Adieu to a Soldier	272
Turn O Libertad	273
To the Leaven'd Soil They Trod	273

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd	274
O Captain! My Captain!	282
Hush'd be the Camps To-day	283
This Dust Was Once the Man	283
By Blue Ontario's Shore.	283
Reversals	297

AUTUMN RIVULETS

As Consequent, etc.	298
The Return of the Heroes	299
There was a Child Went Forth	304
Old Ireland	305
The City Dead-House	306
This Compost	307
To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire	309
Unnamed Lands	310

	PAGE
Song of Prudence	311
The Singer in the Prison	314
Warble for Lilac-Time	316
Outlines for a Tomb	317
Out from Behind This Mask	319
Vocalism	320
To Him That was Crucified	321
You Felons on Trial in Courts	321
Laws for Creations	322
To a Common Prostitute	323
I was Looking a Long While	323
Thought	323
Miracles	324
Sparkles from the Wheel	325
To a Pupil	325
Unfolded Out of the Folds	326
What am I After All	326
Kosmos	327
Others may Praise What They Like	327
Who Learns My Lesson Complete?	327
Tests	329
The Torch	329
O Star of France	329
The Ox-Tamer	330
An Old Man's Thought of School	331
Wandering at Morn	332
Italian Music in Dakota	333
With All Thy Gifts	333
My Picture-Gallery	334
The Prairie States	334
Proud Music of the Storm	334
Passage to India	340
Prayer of Columbus	348
The Sleepers	350
Transpositions	358
To Think of Time	359

WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH

Darest Thou Now O Soul	364
Whispers of Heavenly Death	365
Chanting the Square Deific	365
Of Him I Love Day and Night	367
Yet, Yet, Ye Downcast Hours	368
As if a Phantom Caress'd Me	368

	PAGE
Assurances	369
Quicksand Years	369
That Music Always Round Me	370
What Ship Puzzled at Sea	370
A Noiseless Patient Spider	370
O Living Always, Always Dying	371
To One Shortly to Die	371
Night on the Prairies	372
Thought	373
The Last Invocation	373
As I Watch'd the Ploughman Ploughing	374
Pensive and Faltering	374
Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood	374
A Paumanok Picture	379

FROM NOON TO STARRY NIGHT

Thou Orb Aloft Full-Dazzling	380
Faces	381
The Mystic Trumpeter	384
To a Locomotive in Winter	387
O Magnet-South	388
Mannahatta	389
All is Truth	390
A Riddle Song	391
Excelsior	392
Ah Poverties, Wincings, and Sulky Retreats	393
Thoughts	393
Mediums	394
Weave in, My Hardy Life	395
Spain, 1873-4.	395
By Broad Potomac's Shore	395
From Far Dakota's Cañons (June 25, 1876)	396
Old War-Dreams	397
Thick-Sprinkled Bunting	397
What Best I See in Thee	398
Spirit That Form'd This Scene	398
As I Walk these Broad Majestic Days	399
A Clear Midnight	400

SONGS OF PARTING

As the Time Draws Nigh.	400
Years of the Modern	400
Ashes of Soldiers	402

	PAGE
Thoughts	403
Song at Sunset	405
As at Thy Portals also Death	407
My Legacy	407
Pensive on Her Dead Gazing	407
Camps of Green	408
The Sobbing of the Bells	409
As they Draw to a Close	410
Joy, Shipmate, Joy!	410
The Untold Want	410
Portals	410
These Carols	411
Now Finalè to the Shore	411
So Long!	411

SANDS AT SEVENTY (First Annex)

Mannahatta	414
Paumanok	414
From Montauk Point	414
To Those Who've Fail'd	415
A Carol Closing Sixty-Nine	415
The Bravest Soldiers	415
A Font of Type	416
As I Sit Writing Here	416
My Canary Bird	416
Queries to My Seventieth Year	416
The Wallabout Martyrs	417
The First Dandelion	417
America.	417
Memories	417
To-day and Thee	418
After the Dazzle of Day	418
Abraham Lincoln, born February 12, 1809	418
Out of May's Shows Selected	418
Halycon Days.	418
Fancies at Navesink	
<i>The Pilot in the Mist</i>	419
<i>Had I the Choice</i>	419
<i>You Tides with Ceaseless Swell</i>	420
<i>Last of Ebb, and Daylight Waning</i>	420
<i>And Yet Not You Alone</i>	420
<i>Proudly the Flood Comes In</i>	421
<i>By That Long Scan of Waves</i>	421
<i>Then Last of All</i>	421

	PAGE
Election Day, November, 1884	421
With Husky-Haughty Lips, O Sea	422
Death of General Grant	423
Red Jacket (from Aloft)	423
Washington's Monument, February, 1885	424
Of that Blithe Throat of Thine	424
Broadway	425
To Get the Final Lilt of Songs	425
Old Salt Kossabone.	426
The Dead Tenor	426
Continuities	427
Yonnondio	427
Life	428
'Going Somewhere'	428
Small the Theme of My Chant	428
True Conquerors	429
The United States to Old World Critics	429
The Calming Thought of All	429
Thanks in Old Age	430
Life and Death	430
The Voice of the Rain	430
Soon Shall the Winter's Foil be Here	431
While Not the Past Forgetting	431
The Dying Veteran	432
Stronger Lessons	432
A Prairie Sunset	432
Twenty Years	433
Orange Buds by Mail from Florida	433
Twilight	434
You Lingering Sparse Leaves of Me	434
Not Meagre, Latent Boughs Alone	434
The Dead Emperor	434
As the Greek's Signal Flame	435
The Dismantled Ship	435
Now Precedent Songs, Farewell	435
An Evening Lull	436
Old Age's Lambent Peaks	436
After the Supper and Talk	436

GOOD-BYE MY FANCY (Second Annex)

Sail Out for Good, Eidólon Yacht!	437
Lingering Last Drops	437
Good-Bye My Fancy	438
On, on the Same, ye Jocund Twain!	438

My 71st Year	439
Apparitions	439
The Pallid Wreath	439
An Ended Day	440
Old Age's Ship & Crafty Death's	440
To the Pending Year	441
Shakspeare-Bacon's Cipher	441
Long, Long Hence	442
Bravo, Paris Exposition!	442
Interpolation Sounds	442
To the Sunset Breeze	443
Old Chants	444
A Christmas Greeting	445
Sounds of the Winter	445
A Twilight Song	445
When the Full-Grown Poet Came	446
Osceola	447
A Voice from Death	447
A Persian Lesson	449
The Commonplace	449
'The Rounded Catalogue Divine Complete'	450
Mirages	450
L. of G.'s Purport	451
The Unexpress'd	452
Grand is the Seen	452
Unseen Buds	452
Good-Bye My Fancy!	453

OLD AGE ECHOES (Posthumous Additions)

A Kiss to the Bride	454
Nay, Tell Me Not To-day the Publish'd Shame	454
To Be At All	455
Death's Valley	456
On the Same Picture	456
A Thought of Columbus	457

ALPHABETICAL TITLE INDEX	459
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Inscriptions

ONE'S-SELF I SING

ONE'S-SELF I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the
Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier far,
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

1867

1871

AS I PONDER'D IN SILENCE

As I ponder'd in silence,
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,
A Phantom arose before me with distrustful aspect,
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,
The genius of poets of old lands,
As to me directing like flame its eyes,
With finger pointing to many immortal songs,
And menacing voice, *What singest thou?* it said,
Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring bards?
And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,
The making of perfect soldiers.

10

Be it so, then I answer'd,
I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and greater one
than any,
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight, advance
and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,

*(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last,) the
field the world,
For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,
Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,
I above all promote brave soldiers.*

1871

1871

IN CABIN'D SHIPS AT SEA

*In cabin'd ships at sea,
The boundless blue on every side expanding,
With whistling winds and music of the waves, the large im-
perious waves,
Or some lone bark buoy'd on the dense marine,
Where joyous full of faith, spreading white sails,
She cleaves the ether mid the sparkle and the foam of day, or
under many a star at night,
By sailors young and old haply will I, a reminiscence of the
land, be read,
In full rapport at last.*

*Here are our thoughts, voyagers' thoughts,
Here not the land, firm land, alone appears, may then by them 10
be said,
The sky o'erarches here, we feel the undulating deck beneath
our feet,
We feel the long pulsation, ebb and flow of endless motion.
The tones of unseen mystery, the vague and vast suggestions of
the briny world, the liquid-flowing syllables,
The perfume, the faint creaking of the cordage, the melancholy
rhythm,
The boundless vista and the horizon far and dim are all here,
And this is ocean's poem.*

*Then falter not O book, fulfil your destiny,
You not a reminiscence of the land alone,
You too as a lone bark cleaving the ether, purpos'd I know
not whither, yet ever full of faith,
Consort to every ship that sails, sail you! 20
Bear forth to them folded my love, (dear mariners, for you
I fold it here in every leaf;)*

Speed on my book! spread your white sails my little bark
athwart the imperious waves,
Chant on, sail on, bear o'er the boundless blue from me to
every sea,
This song for mariners and all their ships.

1871

1881

TO FOREIGN LANDS

I HEARD that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle the
New World,
And to define America, her athletic Democracy,
Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in them
what you wanted.

1860

1871

TO A HISTORIAN

You who celebrate bygoness,
Who have explored the outward, the surfaces of the races,
the life that has exhibited itself,
Who have treated of man as the creature of politics, aggregates, rulers and priests,
I, habitan¹ of the Alleghanies, treating of him as he is in himself in his own rights,
Pressing the pulse of the life that has seldom exhibited itself,
(the great pride of man in himself),
Chanter of Personality, outlining what is yet to be,
I project the history of the future.

1860

1871

TO THEE OLD CAUSE

To thee old cause!
Thou peerless, passionate, good cause,
Thou stern, remorseless, sweet idea,
Deathless throughout the ages, races, lands,
After a strange sad war, great war for thee,²

¹ Habitant.

² The Civil War.

[The Editor's footnotes are intended chiefly to clarify the text, particularly for readers other than those in the United States.]

(I think all war through time was really fought, and ever will
be really fought, for thee,
These chants for thee, the eternal march of thee.
(A war O soldiers not for itself alone,
Far, far more stood silently waiting behind, now to advance
in this book.)

Thou orb of many orbs!
Thou seething principle! thou well-kept, latent germ! thou
centre!
Around the idea of thee the war revolving,
With all its angry and vehement play of causes,
(With vast results to come for thrice a thousand years,)
These recitatives¹ for thee,—my book and the war are one,
Merged in its spirit I and mine, as the contest hinged on thee,
As a wheel on its axis turns, this book unwitting to itself,
Around the idea of thee.

1871

1881

EIDÓLONS²

I MET a seer,
Passing the hues and objects of the world,
The fields of art and learning, pleasure, sense,
To glean eidólons.

Put in thy chants said he,
No more the puzzling hour nor day, nor segments, parts, put
in,
Put first before the rest as light for all and entrance-song of all,
That of eidólons.

Ever the dim beginning,
Ever the growth, the rounding of the circle,
Ever the summit and the merge at last, (to surely start again,)
Eidólons! eidólons!

Ever the mutable,
Ever materials, changing, crumbling, re-cohering,
Ever the ateliers, the factories divine,
Issuing eidólons.

¹ Whitman emphasizes his escape from conventional melodic verse.

² Images as symbols of ideas (reality).

Lo, I or you,
Or woman, man, or state, known or unknown,
We seeming solid wealth, strength, beauty build,
But really build eidólons.

20

The ostent evanescent,
The substance of an artist's mood or savañ's studies long,
Or warrior's, martyr's, hero's toils,
To fashion his eidólon.

Of every human life,
(The units gather'd, posted, not a thought, emotion, deed,
left out,)
The whole or large or small summ'd, added up,
In its eidólon.

The old, old urge,
Based on the ancient pinnacles, lo, newer, higher pinnacles,
From science and the modern still impell'd,
The old, old urge, eidólons.

30

The present now and here,
America's busy, teeming, intricate whirl,
Of aggregate and segregate for only thence releasing,
To-day's eidólons.

These with the past,
Of vanish'd lands, of all the reigns of kings across the sea,
Old conquerors, old campaigns, old sailor's voyages,
Joining eidólons.

40

Densities, growth, façades,
Strata of mountains, soils, rocks, giant trees,
Far-born, far-dying, living long, to leave,
Eidólons everlasting.

Exaltè, rapt, ecstatic,
The visible but their womb of birth,
Of orbic tendencies to shape and shape and shape,
The mighty earth-eidólon.

All space, all time,
(The stars, the terrible perturbations of the suns,
Swelling, collapsing, ending, serving their longer, shorter
use,)
Fill'd with eidólons only.

50

The noiseless myriads,
The infinite oceans where the rivers empty,
The separate countless free identities, like eyesight,
The true realities, eidólons.

Not this the world,
Nor these the universes, they the universes,
Purport and end, ever the permanent life of life,
Eidólons, eidólons.

60

Beyond thy lectures learn'd professor,
Beyond thy telescope or spectroscope observer keen, beyond
all mathematics,
Beyond the doctor's surgery, anatomy, beyond the chemist
with his chemistry,
The entities of entities, eidólons.

Unfixed yet fix'd,
Ever shall be, ever have been and are,
Sweeping the present to the infinite future,
Eidólons, eidólons, eidólons.

The prophet and the bard,
Shall yet maintain themselves, in higher stages yet,
Shall mediate to the Modern, to Democracy, interpret yet to
them,
God and eidólons.

70

And thee my soul,
Joys, ceaseless exercises, exaltations,
Thy yearning amply fed at last, prepared to meet,
Thy mates, eidólons.

Thy body permanent,
The body lurking there within thy body,
The only purport of the form thou art, the real I myself,
An image, an eidólon.

80

Thy very songs not in thy songs,
No special strains to sing, none for itself,
But from the whole resulting, rising at last and floating,
A round full-orb'd eidólon.

FOR HIM I SING

FOR him ¹ I sing,
I raise the present on the past,
(As some perennial tree out of its roots, the present on the
past,)
With time and space I him dilate and fuse the immortal laws,
To make himself by them the law unto himself.

1871

1871

WHEN I READ THE BOOK

WHEN I read the book, the biography famous,
And is this then (said I) what the author calls a man's life?
And so will some one when I am dead and gone write my life?
(As if any man really knew aught of my life,
Why even I myself I often think know little or nothing of my
real life,
Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clews and indirections
I seek for my own use to trace out here.)

1867

1871

BEGINNING MY STUDIES

BEGINNING my studies the first step pleas'd me so much,
The mere fact consciousness, these forms, the power of
motion,
The least insect or animal, the senses, eyesight, love,
The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,
I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,
But stop and loiter all the time to sing it in ecstatic songs.

1867

1871

BEGINNERS ²

How they are provided for upon the earth, (appearing at
intervals,)
How dear and dreadful they are to the earth,
How they inure to themselves as much as to any—what a
paradox appears their age,
How people respond to them, yet know them not,
How there is something relentless in their fate all times,
How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation and
reward,
And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for the
same great purchase.

1860

1860

¹ The reader.

² Original minds.

TO THE STATES

To the States or any one of them, or any city of the States,
Resist much, obey little,
Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved,
Once fully enslaved, no nation, state, city, of this earth, ever
afterward resumes its liberty.

1860

1881

ON JOURNEYS THROUGH THE STATES

ON journeys through the States we start,
(Ay through the world, urged by these songs,
Sailing henceforth to every land, to every sea,)
We willing learners of all, teachers of all, and lovers of all.
We have watch'd the seasons dispensing themselves and
passing on,
And have said, Why should not a man or woman do as much
as the seasons, and effuse as much?

We dwell a while in every city and town,
We pass through Kanada,¹ the North-east, the vast valley of
the Mississippi, and the Southern States,
We confer on equal terms with each of the States,
We make trial of ourselves and invite men and women to hear,
We say to ourselves, Remember, fear not, be candid, pro-
mulge² the body and the soul,
Dwell a while and pass on, be copious, temperate, chaste,
magnetic,
And what you effuse may then return as the seasons return,
And may be just as much as the seasons.

10

1860

1871

TO A CERTAIN CANTATRICE³

HERE, take this gift,
I was reserving it for some hero, speaker, or general,
One who should serve the good old cause, the great idea, the
progress and freedom of the race,
Some brave confronter of despots, some daring rebel;
But I see that what I was reserving belongs to you just as
much as to any.

1860

1871

¹ Canada.

² Promulgate.

³ Marietta Alboni.

ME IMPERTURBE ¹

ME imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,
Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst of irrational things,
Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they,
Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes,
less important than I thought,
Me toward the Mexican sea, or in the Mannahatta ² or the
Tennessee, or far north or inland,
A river man, or a man of the woods or of any farm-life of
these States or of the coast, or the lakes or Kanada,
Me wherever my life is lived, O to be self-balanced for contingencies,
To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and animals do.

1860

1881

SAVANTISM

THITHER as I look I see each result and glory retracing itself
and nestling close, always obligated,
Thither hours, months, years—thither trades, compacts,
establishments, even the most minute,
Thither every-day life, speech, utensils, politics, persons,
estates;
Thither we also, I with my leaves and songs, trustful, admirant,
As a father to his father going takes his children along with him.

1860

1860

THE SHIP STARTING

Lo, the unbounded sea,
On its breast a ship starting, spreading all sails, carrying even
her moonsails,
The pennant is flying aloft as she speeds she speeds so stately
—below emulous waves press forward,
They surround the ship with shining curving motions and
foam.

1865

1881

¹ Imperturbable.

² Indian name for Manhattan. See the poems by that title,
pp. 389, 414.

I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be
 blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves
 off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the
 deck-hand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter
 singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the
 morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at
 work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young 10
 fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.
18601867

WHAT PLACE IS BESIEGED?

WHAT place is besieged, and vainly tries to raise the siege?
Lo, I send to that place a commander, swift, brave, immortal,
And with him horse and foot, and parks of artillery,
And artillery-men, the deadliest that ever fired gun.
18601867

STILL THOUGH THE ONE I SING

STILL though the one I sing,
(One, yet of contradictions made,) I dedicate to Nationality,
I leave in him revolt, (O latent right of insurrection! O
 quenchless, indispensable fire!)
18711871

SHUT NOT YOUR DOORS

SHUT not your doors to me proud libraries,
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd shelves, yet
 needed most, I bring,
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every thing,
10

A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt by the intellect,
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page.
1865 1881

POETS TO COME

POETS to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater
than before known,
Arouse! for you must justify me.

I myself but write one or two indicative words for the future,
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the
darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping,
turns a casual look upon you and then averts his face,
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you.

1860

1867

TO YOU

STRANGER, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me,
why should you not speak to me?
And why should I not speak to you? ✓

1860

1860

THOU READER

THOU reader throbbest life and pride and love the same as I,
Therefore for thee the following chants.

1881

1881

*Starting from Paumanok*¹

I

STARTING from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born,
Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother,
After roaming many lands, lover of populous pavements,
Dweller in Mannahatta my city, or on southern savannas,
Or a soldier camp'd or carrying my knapsack and gun, or a
miner in California,
Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat, my
drink from the spring,
Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,
Far from the clank of crowds intervals passing rapt and
happy,
Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri, aware of
mighty Niagara,²
Aware of the buffalo³ herds grazing the plains, the hirsute 10
and strong-breasted bull,
Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month⁴ flowers experienced, stars,
rain, snow, my amaze,
Having studied the mocking-bird's⁵ tones and the flight of
the mountain-hawk,
And heard at dawn the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush
from the swamp-cedars,
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

2

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.

This then is life,
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes
and convulsions.
How curious! how real!
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun. 20

¹ Indian name for Long Island.

² Niagara Falls.

³ Bison.

⁴ Whitman often uses Quaker terminology.

⁵ An American mimetic songster.

See revolving the globe,
The ancestor-continents away group'd together,
The present and future continents north and south,¹ with the
isthmus between.

See, vast trackless spaces,
As in a dream they change, they swiftly fill,
Countless masses debouch upon them,
They are now cover'd with the foremost people, arts, institu-
tions, known.

See, projected through time,
For me an audience interminable.

30

With firm and regular step they wend, they never stop,
Successions of men, Americanos,² a hundred millions,
One generation playing its part and passing on,
Another generation playing its part and passing on in its turn,
With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards me to listen,
With eyes retrospective towards me.

3

Americanos! conquerors! marches humanitarian!
Foremost! century marches! Libertad!³ masses!
For you a programme of chants.

Chants of the prairies,⁴
Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the
Mexican sea,
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Min-
nesota,
Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence
equidistant,
Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

40

4

Take my leaves ⁵ America, take them South and take them
North,
Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own
offspring,
Surround them East and West, for they would surround you,
And you precedents, connect lovingly with them, for they
connect lovingly with you.

¹ North and South America.

² Spanish for *Americans*.

³ Spanish for *liberty*.

⁴ Grassy plains.

⁵ Poems.

I conn'd old times,
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters,
Now if eligible O that the great masters might return and
study me.

In the name of these States shall I scorn the antique?
Why these are the children of the antique to justify it.

5

Dead poets, philosophers, priests,
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,
Language-shapers on other shores,
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or desolate,
I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left
wafted hither,

I have perused it, own it is admirable, (moving awhile among
it,)

Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever deserve 60
more than it deserves,

Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it,
I stand in my place with my own day here.

Here lands female and male,
Here the heir-ship and heiress-ship of the world, here the
flame of materials,

Here spirituality the translatress, the openly-avow'd,
The ever-tending, the finale of visible forms,
The satisfier, after due long-waiting now advancing,
Yes here comes my mistress the soul.

6

The soul,
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid— 70
longer than water ebbs and flows.

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be
the most spiritual poems,
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my
soul and of immortality.

I will make a song for these States that no one State may
under any circumstances be subjected to another State,
And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day and
by night between all the States, and between any two of
them,

And I will make a song for the ears of the President, full of
weapons with menacing points,
And behind the weapons countless dissatisfied faces;
And a song make I of the One form'd out of all,
The fang'd and glittering One whose head is over all,
Resolute warlike One including and over all,
(However high the head of any else that head is over all.)

80

I will acknowledge contemporary lands,
I will trail the whole geography of the globe and salute courteously every city large and small,
And employments! I will put in my poems that with you is
heroism upon land and sea,
And I will report all heroism from an American point of view.

I will sing the song of companionship,
I will show what alone must finally compact these,
I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly love,
indicating it in me,

I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that were
threatening to consume me,

I will lift what has too long kept down those smouldering fires,

90

I will give them complete abandonment,

I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,

For who but I should understand love with all its sorrow and
joy?

And who but I should be the poet of comrades?

7

I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races,
I advance from the people in their own spirit,
Here is what sings unrestricted faith.

Omnes! omnes! ¹ let others ignore what they may,
I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also,
I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation is—and

100

I say there is in fact no evil,
(Or if there is I say it is just as important to you, to the land
or to me, as any thing else.)

I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a
religion, I descend into the arena,
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there, the
winner's pealing shouts,
Who knows? they may rise from me yet, and soar above
every thing.)

¹ All.

Each is not for its own sake,
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how certain the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States 110
must be their religion,
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur;
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,
Nor land nor man or woman without religion.)

8

What are you doing young man? ✓
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science, art,
amours?

These ostensible realities, politics, points?

Your ambition or business whatever it may be?
It is well—against such I say not a word, I am their poet also,
But behold! such swiftly subside, burnt up for religion's sake,
For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame, the essential 120
life of the earth,
Any more than such are to religion.

9

What do you seek so pensive and silent?
What do you need camerado? ¹
Dear son do you think it is love?

Listen dear son—listen America, daughter or son,
It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess, and
yet it satisfies, it is great,
But there is something else very great, it makes the whole
coincide,
It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous hands
sweeps and provides for all.

¹ Spanish for *comrade*.

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater
religion,
The following chants each for its kind I sing.

130

My comrade!

For you to share with me two greatnesses, and a third one rising
inclusive and more resplendent,
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness of
Religion.

Melange ¹ mine own, the unseen and the seen,
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,
Prophetic spirit of material shifting and flickering around
me,
Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air that
we know not of,
Contact daily and hourly that will not release me,
These selecting, these in hints demanded of me.

Not he with a daily kiss onward from childhood kissing 140
me,
Has winded and twisted around me that which holds me to
him,
Any more than I am held to the heavens and all the spiritual
world,
After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes—equalities! O divine average!
Warblings under the sun, usher'd as now, or at noon, or
setting,
Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching hither,
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to them,
and cheerfully pass them forward.

II

As I have walk'd in Alabama my morning walk,
I have seen where the she-bird the mocking-bird sat on her
nest in the briers hatching her brood.

I have seen the he-bird also, 150
I have paus'd to hear him near at hand inflating his throat
and joyfully singing.

¹ Mixture.

And while I paus'd it came to me that what he really sang for
was not there only,
Nor for his mate nor himself only, nor all sent back by the
echoes,
But subtle, clandestine, away beyond,
A charge transmitted and gift occult for those being born.

12

Democracy! near at hand to you a throat¹ is now inflating
itself and joyfully singing.

Ma femme!² for the brood beyond us and of us,
For those who belong here and those to come,
I exultant to be ready for them will now shake out carols
stronger and haughtier than have ever yet been heard
upon earth.

I will make the songs of passion to give them their way,
And your songs outlaw'd offenders, for I scan you with kin-
dred eyes, and carry you with me the same as any.

160

I will make the true poem of riches,
To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres and
goes forward and is not dropt by death;
I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all, and I will be
the bard of personality,
And I will show of male and female that either is but the
equal of the other,
And sexual organs and acts! do you concentrate in me, for I
am determin'd to tell you with courageous clear voice to
prove you illustrious,
And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present,
and can be none in the future,
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be
turn'd to beautiful results,
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than
death,
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and
events are compact,
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles,
each as profound as any.

170

I will not make poems with reference to parts,
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to
ensemble,

¹ The poet's own.

² My bride, i.e. Democracy.

And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference
to all days,
And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem but
has reference to the soul,
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find
there is no one nor any particle of one but has reference
to the soul.

13

Was somebody asking to see the soul?
See, your own shape and countenance, persons, substances,
beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.

All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them;
How can the real body ever die and be buried?

180

Of your real body and any man's or woman's real body,
Item for item it will elude the hands of the corpse-cleaners
and pass to fitting spheres,
Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth to
the moment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their impression,
the meaning, the main concern,
Any more than a man's substance and life or a woman's sub-
stance and life return in the body and the soul,
Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main con-
cern, and includes and is the soul;
Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your body,
or any part of it!

14

Whoever you are, to you endless announcements!

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet?
Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth, and indicative
hand?

190

Toward the male of the States, and toward the female of the
States,
Exulting words, words to Democracy's lands.

Interlink'd, food-yielding lands!
Land of coal¹ and iron! land of gold! land of cotton, sugar,
rice!

¹ Coals.

Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and hemp! land of
 the apple and the grape!
 Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world! land
 of those sweet-air'd interminable plateaus!
 Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of adobie! ¹
 Lands where the north-west Columbia winds, and where the
 south-west Colorado winds!
 Land of the eastern Chesapeake! land of the Delaware! 20
 Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan!
 Land of the Old Thirteen! ² Massachusetts land! land of Ver-
 mont and Connecticut!
 Land of the ocean shores! land of sierras and peaks!
 Land of boatmen and sailors! fishermen's land!
 Inextricable lands! the clutch'd together! the passionate ones!
 The side by side! the elder and younger brothers! the bony-
 limb'd!
 The great women's land! the feminine! the experienced sisters
 and the inexperienced sisters!
 Far breath'd land! Arctic braced! Mexican breez'd! the di-
 verse! the compact!
 The Pennsylvanian! the Virginian! the double Carolinian! ³
 O all and each well-loved by me! my intrepid nations! O I at 210
 any rate include you all with perfect love!
 I cannot be discharged from you! not from one any sooner
 than another!
 O death! O for all that, I am yet of you unseen this hour with
 irrepressible love,
 Walking New England, a friend, a traveler,
 Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer ripples on
 Paumanok's sands,
 Crossing the prairies, dwelling again in Chicago, dwelling in
 every town,
 Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,
 Listening to orators and oratresses in public halls,
 Of and through the States as during life, each man and
 woman my neighbor,
 The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as near
 to him and her,
 The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet with 220
 any of them,
 Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river, ⁴ yet in my house
 of adobie,

¹ Adobe, sun-dried bricks.

² The original states of the Union.

³ North and South Carolina.

⁴ The Mississippi.

Yet returning eastward, yet in the Seaside State or in Mary-
 land,
 Yet Kanadian cheerily braving the winter, the snow and ice
 welcome to me,
 Yet a true son either of Maine or of the Granite State,¹ or the
 Narragansett Bay State,² or the Empire State,³
 Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet welcoming
 every new brother,
 Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the hour
 they unite with the old ones,
 Coming among the new ones myself to be their companion
 and equal, coming personally to you now,
 Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

15

With me with firm holding, yet haste, haste on.

For your life adhere to me,
 (I may have to be persuaded many times before I consent to
 give myself really to you, but what of that?
 Must not Nature be persuaded many times?)

230

No dainty dolce affettuoso ⁴ I,
 Bearded, sun-burnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have arrived,
 To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes of the uni-
 verse,
 For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.

16

On my way a moment I pause,
 Here for you! and here for America!
 Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the States I
 harbinge glad and sublime,
 And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of the red
 aborigines.

240

The red aborigines,⁵
 Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as of
 birds and animals in the woods, syllabled, to us for
 names,

¹ New Hampshire. ² Rhode Island. ³ New York.

⁴ Passage of music sweet with sentiment.

⁵ American Indians.

Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez,
Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-
Walla,
Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charging
the water and the land with names.

17

Expanding and swift, henceforth,
Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick and audacious,
A world primal again, vistas of glory incessant and branching,
A new race dominating previous ones and grander far, with
new contests,
New politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions 250
and arts.

These, my voice announcing—I will sleep no more but arise,
You oceans that have been calm within me! how I feel you,
fathomless, stirring, preparing unprecedented waves and
storms.

18

See, steamers steaming through my poems,
See, in my poems immigrants continually coming and land-
ing,
See, in arriere, the wigwam,¹ the trail, the hunter's hut, the
flatboat,² the maize-leaf,³ the claim, the rude fence, and
the backwoods village,
See, on the one side the Western Sea and on the other the
Eastern Sea, how they advance and retreat upon my
poems as upon their own shores,
See, pastures and forests in my poems—see, animals wild and
tame—see, beyond the Kaw, countless herds of buffalo
feeding on short curly grass,
See, in my poems, cities, solid, vast, inland, with paved
streets, with iron and stone edifices, ceaseless vehicles,
and commerce,
See, the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press—see, the
electric telegraph stretching across the continent,

¹ Indian hut.

² A large flat-bottomed boat used to float goods down
western rivers.

³ Leaf of Indian corn.

See, through Atlantica's depths pulses American Europe 260
 reaching, pulses of Europe duly return'd,
 See, the strong and quick locomotive as it departs, panting,
 blowing the steam-whistle,
 See, ploughmen ploughing farms—see, miners digging mines
 —see, the numberless factories,
 See, mechanics busy at their benches with tools—see from
 among them superior judges, philosophers, Presidents,
 emerge, drest in working dresses,
 See, lounging through the shops and fields of the States, me
 well-belov'd, close-held by day and night,
 Hear the loud echoes of my songs there—read the hints come
 at last.

19

O camerado close! O you and me at last, and us two only.
 O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!
 O something ecstatic and undemonstrable! O music wild!
 O now I triumph—and you shall also;
 O hand in hand—O wholesome pleasure—O one more de- 270
 sirer and lover!
 O to haste firm holding—to haste, haste on with me.

1860

1881

Song of Myself

I

I CELEBRATE myself, and sing myself,
 And what I assume you shall assume,
 For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.
 I loafe and invite my soul,
 I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.
 My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil,
 this air,
 Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and
 their parents the same,
 I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
 Hoping to cease not till death.

C 573

23

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation, it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and vine,
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air through my lungs,
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of the wind,
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides,
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd the earth much?

Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?

Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,

You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left,)

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor
look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the
spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things
from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the
beginning and the end,
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now, 40
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,
Always the procreant urge of the world.
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always sub-
stance and increase, always sex,
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed
of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well
entretied,¹ braced in the beams,
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical, 50
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is
not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age,
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while
they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

¹ Not an English word, but apparently a peculiar Whitman
coinage for *kept* or *supported*, derived from the French verb
entretenir.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man
hearty and clean,
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be
less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing;
As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side
through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day
with stealthy tread,
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the
house with their plenty,
Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream
at my eyes,
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,
Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and
which is ahead?

4

Trippers and askers surround me,
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward
and city I live in, or the nation,
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors
old and new,
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I
love,
The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or
loss or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful
news, the fitful events;
These come to me days and nights and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, uni-
tary,
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable cer-
tain rest,
Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,
Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering
at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog
with linguists and contenders,
I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself
to you,
And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture,
not even the best,
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morn-
ing,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd
over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your
tongue to my bare-stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held 90
my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge
that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my
own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the
70 women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson¹ of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence,² heap'd stones, elder,
mullein and poke-weed.³

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full
hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any 100
more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful
green stuff woven.

¹ A timber joining the floor timbers to the keel of a ship.

² A zigzag rail fence.

³ An American berry-bearing plant.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we
may see and remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the
vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow
zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck,¹ Tuckahoe,² Congressman, Cuff,³ I give them the
same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves. 110

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken
soon out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old
mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths 120
for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men
and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring
taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and chil-
dren?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,

¹ Canadian.

² Inhabitant of Eastern Virginia.

³ Short for *Cuffy*, an eponymous name for the negro.

And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at
the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and 130
luckier.

7

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I
know it.

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd
babe, and am not contain'd between my hat and boots,
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one
good,
The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all
good.

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal
and fathomless as myself,
(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male and
female,
For me those that have been boys and that love women, 140
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be
slighted,
For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers and
the mothers of mothers,
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,
For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,
I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot
be shaken away.

8

The little one sleeps in its cradle,
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away
flies with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill, 150

I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the
pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave,¹ tires of carts, sluff² of boot-soles, talk of
the promenaders,

The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb,
the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor,

The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-
balls,

The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs,
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne to the
hospital,

The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly work- 160
ing his passage to the centre of the crowd,

The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck or
in fits,

What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry
home and give birth to babes,

What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what
howls restrain'd by decorum,

Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, accept-
ances, rejections with convex lips,

I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come and I
depart.

9

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn
wagon,

The clear light plays on the brown gray and green inter-
tinged,

The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow. 170

I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and
timothy,³

And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

¹ Pavement.

² Sloughing.

³ Meadow cat's-tail.

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,
 Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,
 In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,
 Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,
 Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and gun by
 my side.

The Yankee clipper¹ is under her sky-sails, she cuts the 180
 sparkle and scud,
 My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout joyously
 from the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt for
 me,
 I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had a
 good time;
 You should have been with us that day round the chowder-
 kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far
 west, the bride was a red girl,
 Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and dumbly
 smoking, they had moccasins² to their feet and large
 thick blankets hanging from their shoulders,
 On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in skins,
 his luxuriant beard and curls protected his neck, he held
 his bride by the hand,
 She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse straight
 locks descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reach'd
 to her feet.

The runaway slave³ came to my house and stopt outside,
 I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile, 190
 Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him
 limpsy⁴ and weak,
 And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured
 him,
 And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and
 bruis'd feet,

¹ A fast sailing ship, developed in America about 1840.

² Soft leather shoes originally worn by Indians.

³ Seeking to escape from states in which, before the Civil War, slavery was legal.

⁴ Limp.

And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave
him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles;
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north,
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner.

II

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;
Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

200

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth
bather,
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from
their long hair,
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

210

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge
to the sun, they do not ask who seizes fast to them,
They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and
bending arch,
They do not think whom they souse with spray.

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his
knife at the stall in the market,
I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and break-
down.¹

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,
Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is a great 220
heat in the fire.

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their movements,
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive
arms,
Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand
so sure,
They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block
swags underneath on its tied-over chain,
The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard, steady
and tall he stands pois'd on one leg on the string-
piece,
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens
over his hip-band,
His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of
his hat away from his forehead,
The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the
black of his polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not 230
stop there,
I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as well
as forward sluing,
To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or object
missing
Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade,
what is that you express in your eyes?
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

¹ A spirited dance.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my distant and day-long ramble,
They rise together, they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me, 240
And consider green and violet and the tufted crown intentional,
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something else,
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills pretty well to me,
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,
Ya-honk he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation,
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose¹ of the north, the cat on the house-sill, the chickadee,² the prairie-dog,³
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats, 250
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-spread wings,
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections,
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or woods,
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses,
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me, 260
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me,
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,
Scattering it freely forever.

¹ American animal related to the European elk.

² The black-cap titmouse.

³ A squirrel-like rodent.

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,
 The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane
 whistles its wild ascending lisp,
 The married and unmarried children ride home to their
 Thanksgiving¹ dinner,
 The pilot seizes the king-pin,² he heaves down with a strong
 arm,
 The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon
 are ready,
 The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,
 The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar, 270
 The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big
 wheel,
 The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loafe
 and looks at the oats and rye,
 The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,
 (He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his
 mother's bedroom;)
 The jour printer³ with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his
 case,
 He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the
 manuscript;
 The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,
 What is removed drops horribly in a pail;
 The quadroon girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard
 nods by the bar-room stove,
 The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his 280
 beat, the gate-keeper marks who pass,
 The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him,
 though I do not know him;)
 The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race,
 The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean
 on their rifles, some sit on logs,
 Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position,
 levels his piece;
 The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or
 levee,
 As the woolly-pates⁴ hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views
 them from his saddle,
 The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their
 partners, the dancers bow to each other,

¹ A national holiday and day of religious thanksgiving.

² Knuckle-pin. ³ Journeyman printer. ⁴ Negro slaves.

The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks to
 the musical rain,
 The Wolverine¹ sets traps on the creek that helps fill the
 Huron,
 The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering 290
 moccasins and bead-bags for sale,
 The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-
 shut eyes bent sideways,
 As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is
 thrown for the shore-going passengers,
 The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister
 winds it off in a ball, and stops now and then for the
 knots,
 The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago
 borne her first child,
 The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine
 or in the factory or mill,
 The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the re-
 porter's lead flies swiftly over the note-book, the sign-
 painter is lettering with blue and gold,
 The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts
 at his desk, the shoemaker waxes his thread,
 The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers
 follow him,
 The child is baptized, the convert is making his first profes-
 sions,
 The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how the 300
 white sails sparkle!)
 The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would
 stray,
 The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser
 higgling about the odd cent;)
 The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the
 clock moves slowly,
 The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,
 The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her
 tipsy and pimpled neck,
 The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and
 wink to each other,
 (Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;)
 The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the
 great Secretaries,
 On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with
 twined arms,

¹ Inhabitant of Michigan.

The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in 310
 the hold,
 The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his
 cattle,
 As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice by
 the jingling of loose change,
 The floor-men are laying the floor, the tanners are tanning the
 roof, the masons are calling for mortar,
 In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the
 laborers;
 Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is
 gather'd, it is the fourth of Seventh-month,¹ (what salutes
 of cannon and small arms!)
 Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the
 mower mows, and the winter-grain falls in the ground;
 Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole
 in the frozen surface,
 The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter
 strikes deep with his axe,
 Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-wood²
 or pecan-trees,³
 Coon-seekers⁴ go through the regions of the Red river or 320
 through those drain'd by the Tennessee, or through
 those of the Arkansas,
 Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche or
 Altamahaw,
 Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-
 grandsons around them,
 In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers
 after their day's sport,
 The city sleeps and the country sleeps,
 The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their
 time,
 The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband
 sleeps by his wife;
 And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to
 them,
 And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,
 And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

¹ Fourth of July, Independence Day.

² A species of poplar.

³ A species of hickory found in southern states

⁴ Racoon hunters.

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise, 330
 Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,
 Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,
 Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with the stuff
 that is fine,

One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest the same
 and the largest the same,

A Southerner soon as a Northerner, a planter nonchalant
 and hospitable down by the Oconee ¹ I live,

A Yankee bound my own way ready for trade, my joints the
 limberest joints on earth and the sternest joints on earth,

A Kentuckian walking the vale of the Elkhorn in my deer-
 skin leggings, a Louisianian or Georgian,

A boatman over lakes or bays or along coasts, a Hoosier,²
 Badger,³ Buck-eye;⁴

At home on Kanadian snow-shoes or up in the bush, or with
 fishermen off Newfoundland,

At home in the fleet of ice-boats, sailing with the rest and 340
 tacking,

At home on the hills of Vermont or in the woods of Maine,
 or the Texan ranch,

Comrade of Californians, comrade of free North-Westerners,
 (loving their big proportions,)

Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade of all who shake
 hands and welcome to drink and meat,

A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfulest,

A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons,

Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,

A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,

Prisoner, fancy-man,⁵ rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

I resist any thing better than my own diversity,

Breathe the air but leave plenty after me,

And am not stuck up, and am in my place. 350

(The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place,

The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see are in
 their place,

The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its place.)

¹ River in Georgia.

² Resident of Indiana.

³ Inhabitant of Wisconsin.

⁴ Inhabitant of Ohio.

⁵ Either a devotee of pugilism, a rowdy, or one who lives
 on the earnings of a prostitute.

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands,
 they are not original with me,
 If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or
 next to nothing,
 If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they
 are nothing,
 If they are not just as close as they are distant they are
 nothing.

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the
water is,

This the common air that bathes the globe.

360

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,
 I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches
 for conquer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?
 I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same spirit in
 which they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead,
 I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for
 them.

Vivas to those who have fail'd!
 And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!
 And to those themselves who sank in the sea!
 And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome 370
 heroes!
 And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest
 heroes known!

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,
 It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make
 appointments with all,
 I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
 The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,
 The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;
 There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and odor of
hair,
This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearn-
ing,
This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,
This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

380

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?
Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the
mica on the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?
Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twittering
through the woods?
Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

20

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?

390

What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you?

All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,
That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow and
filth.

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids,
conformity goes to the fourth-remov'd,
I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be ceremoni-
ous?

Having pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair, counsel'd
with doctors and calculated close,
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

400

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-
corn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.
I know I am solid and sound,
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means.

I know I am deathless,
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's
compass,
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue¹ cut with a burnt
stick at night.

I know I am august,
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood, 410
I see that the elementary laws never apologize,
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house
by, after all.)

I exist as I am, that is enough,
If no other in the world be aware I sit content,
And if each and all be aware I sit content.

390 One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is
myself,
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand or
ten million years,
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can
wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,
I laugh at what you call dissolution, 420
And I know the amplitude of time.

21

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are
with me,
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I trans-
late into a new tongue.

¹ Curlicue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,
I show that size is only development.

430

Have you outstript the rest? are you the President?
It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one, and
still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic nour-
ishing night!

Night of south winds—night of the large few stars!
Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with
blue!

440

Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for
my sake!

Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!
Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give
love!

O unspeakable passionate love. //

22

You sea! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean,
I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me,
We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of
sight of the land,

450

Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,
Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

42

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,
Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths,
Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet always-ready
 graves,
Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and dainty sea,
I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of all
 phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux, I, extoller of hate and concilia-
 tion,
Extoller of amies¹ and those that sleep in each others' arms. 460

I am he attesting sympathy,
(Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip the house
 that supports them?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the
 poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand in-
 different,

My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,
I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging pregnancy?
Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd over and
 rectified?

I find one side a balance and the antipodal side a balance, 470
Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,
Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and early start.

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,
There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well to-day is not
 such a wonder,
The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean
 man or an infidel.

Endless unfolding of words of ages!
And mine a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.

¹ French for *friends*.

A word of the faith that never balks,
Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept Time 480
absolutely.

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes
all,
That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all.

I accept Reality and dare not question it,
Materialism first and last imbuing.

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!
Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,
This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a gram-
mar of the old cartouches,¹
These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown
seas,
This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this is a
mathematician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honors always! 490
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

Less the reminders of properties told my words,
And more the reminders they of life untold, and of freedom
and extrication,
And make short account of neuters and geldings, and favor
men and women fully equipt,
And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives and
them that plot and conspire.

24

Walt Whitman, a kosmos,² of Manhattan the son,
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or
apart from them,
No more modest than immodest. 500

Unscrew the locks from the doors!
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

¹ Oblong figures containing Egyptian inscriptions.

² Cosmos.

Whoever degrades another degrades me,
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me. |

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the
current and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their
counterpart of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,
Voices of the interminable generation of prisoners and
slaves,
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and 510
dwarfs,
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and
of the father-stuff,
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I do not press my fingers across my mouth,
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and 520
heart,
Copulation is no more rank to me than death is.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag
of me is a miracle.
Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch |
or am touch'd from,
The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the
spread of my own body, or any part of it,
Translucent mould of me it shall be you!
Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you!
Firm masculine colter¹ it shall be you! 530

¹ Fore-iron of a plough.

Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you!
You my rich blood! your milky stream pale strippings of my
life!

Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you!
My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!
Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of
guarded duplicate eggs! it shall be you!
Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!
Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be
you!

Sun so generous it shall be you!
Vapors lighting and shading my face it shall be you!
You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you!
Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall be
you!

Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving loungee in
my winding paths, it shall be you!
Hands I have taken, face I have kiss'd, mortal I have ever
touch'd, it shall be you.

I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious,
Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy,
I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of
my faintest wish,
Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of the
friendship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop,¹ I pause to consider if it really be,
A morning-glory² at my window satisfies me more than the
metaphysics of books.

To behold the day-break!
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,
The air tastes good to my palate.

Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols silently rising,
freshly exuding,
Scooting obliquely high and low.

Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs,
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

¹ Uncovered platform at entrance to a house, usually
approached by means of steps.

² A flowering vine.

The earth by the sky staid with, the daily close of their junction,
The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my head,
The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!

25

Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would kill me, 560
If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,
We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the day-break.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of worlds.

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure itself,
It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,
Walt you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?

Come now I will not be tantalized, you conceive too much of articulation,
Do you not know O speech how the buds beneath you are 570
folded?

Waiting in gloom, protected by frost,
The dirt receding before my prophetic screams,
I underlying causes to balance them at last,
My knowledge my live parts, it keeping tally with the meaning of all things,
Happiness, (which whoever hears me let him or her set out in search of this day.)

My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me what I really am,
Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me,
I crowd your sleekest and best by simply looking toward you.

Writing and talk do not prove me,
I carry the plenum of proof and every thing else in my face, 580
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.

Now I will do nothing but listen,
To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds contribute
toward it.

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of
flames, clack of sticks cooking my meals.
I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice,
I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or
following,
Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the
day and night,
Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud laugh
of work-people at their meals,
The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones of the
sick,
The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips pro- 590
nouncing a death-sentence,
The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the wharves,
the refrain of the anchor-lifters,
The ring of alarm-bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of swift-
streaking engines and hose-carts with premonitory
tinkles and color'd lights,
The steam-whistle, the solid roll of the train of approaching
cars,
The slow march play'd at the head of the association march-
ing two and two,
(They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped with
black muslin.)

I hear the violoncello, ('tis the young man's heart's com-
plaint),
I hear the key'd cornet, it glides quickly in through my ears,
It shakes mad-sweet pangs through my belly and breast.

I hear the chorus, it is a grand opera,
Ah this indeed is music—this suits me. 600

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,
It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd
them,

It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the indolent
waves,
I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,
Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in
fakes of death,
At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,
And that we call Being.

610

27

To be in any form, what is that?
(Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back
thither,)
If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug¹ in its callous
shell were enough.

Mine is no callous shell,
I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop,
They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.

I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am hungry,
To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I
can stand.

28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,
Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,
My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is
hardly different from myself,

620

On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,
Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,
Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,
Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and
pasture-fields,

Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,
They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the
edges of me,
No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my
anger,

630

Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,
Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.

¹ An American clam.

The sentries desert every other part of me,
They have left me helpless to a red marauder,
They all come to the headland to witness and assist against
me.

I am given up by traitors,
I talk wildly, I have lost my wits, I and nobody else am the
greatest traitor,
I went myself first to the headland, my own hands carried me
there.

You villain touch! what are you doing? my breath is tight in 640
its throat,
Unclench your floodgates, you are too much for me.

29

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd
touch!
Did it make you ache so, leaving me?
Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of perpetual
loan,
Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.
Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and
vital,
Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

30

All truths wait in all things,
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon, 650
The insignificant is as big to me as any,
(What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince,
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,
Only what nobody denies is so.)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,
And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or woman,

And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have for 660
each other,
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until it
becomes omnific,
And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.

31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of
the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and
the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of
heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all
machinery,
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any
statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of
infidels.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, 670
grains, esculent roots,
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,
But call any thing back again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my
approach,
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd
bones,
In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold shapes,
In vain the ocean setting in hollows and the great monsters
lying low,
In vain the buzzard ¹ houses herself with the sky,
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs, 680
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the
cliff.

¹ Probably the turkey-buzzard, an American vulture.

I think I could turn and live with animals, they 're so placid
and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of
owning things,

Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thou- 690
sands of years ago,

Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.
So they show their relations to me and I accept them,
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in
their possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens,
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?

Myself moving forward then and now and forever,
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them,
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remembrancers,
Picking out here one that I love, and now go with him on 700
brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my
caresses,
Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears finely cut, flexibly
moving.

His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race around
and return.

I but use you a minute, then I resign you, stallion,
Why do I need your paces when I myself out-gallop them?
Even as I stand or sit passing faster than you.

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at, 710
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars of the
morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camping
with lumbermen,

Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and rivu-
let bed,

Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and par-
snips, crossing savannas, trailing in forests,

Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new pur- 720
chase,

Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat down
the shallow river,

Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead,
where the buck turns furiously at the hunter,

Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock, where
the otter is feeding on fish,

Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the
bayou,

Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey,
where the beaver pats the mud with his paddle-shaped
tail;

Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton
plant, over the rice in its low moist field,

Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum
and slender shoots from the gutters,

Over the western persimmon,¹ over the long-leav'd corn, over
the delicate blue-flower flax,

Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer
there with the rest,

Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades in the 730
breeze;

Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding on
by low scragged limbs,

Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the
leaves of the brush,

Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the wheat-
lot,

Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve, where the great
gold-bug² drops through the dark,

Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and
flows to the meadow,

Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous
shuddering of their hides,

¹ American date-plum.

² Golden beetle.

Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where andirons
 straddle the hearth-slab, where cobwebs fall in festoons
 from the rafters;
 Where trip-hammers crash, where the press is whirling its
 cylinders,
 Where the human heart beats with terrible throes under its
 ribs,
 Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating in 740
 it myself and looking composedly down,)
 Where the life-car¹ is drawn on the slip-noose, where the heat
 hatches pale-green eggs in the dented sand,
 Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never forsakes it,
 Where the steam-ship trails hind-ways its long pennant of
 smoke,
 Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out of the
 water,
 Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents,
 Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead are
 corrupting below;
 Where the dense-starr'd flag² is borne at the head of the regi-
 ments,
 Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island,
 Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my coun-
 tenance,
 Upon a door-step, upon the horse-block of hard wood out- 750
 side,
 Upon the race-course, or enjoying picnics or jigs or a good
 game of base-ball,
 At he-festivals, with blackguard gibes, ironical license, bull-
 dances,³ drinking, laughter,
 At the cider-mill tasting the sweets of the brown mash, suck-
 ing the juice through a straw,
 At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find,
 At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings,⁴ house-
 raisings;
 Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles, cackles,
 screams, weeps,
 Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard, where the dry-
 stalks are scatter'd, where the brood-cow waits in the
 hovel,

¹ For saving persons or goods from wrecked vessels.

² The flag of the United States.

³ Stag dances.

⁴ Apple-bees and husking-bees, neighbourhood gatherings
 for group labour and festivity.

Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, where the
 stud to the mare, where the cock is treading the hen,
 Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food with
 short jerks,
 Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and 760
 lonesome prairie,
 Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square
 miles far and near,
 Where the humming-bird ¹ shimmers, where the neck of the
 long-loved swan is curving and winding,
 Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she laughs
 her near-human laugh,
 Where bee-hives range on a gray bench in the garden half hid
 by the high weeds,
 Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the ground
 with their heads out,
 Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery,
 Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and icicled
 trees,
 Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the
 marsh at night and feeds upon small crabs,
 Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm
 noon,
 Where the katy-did ² works her chromatic reed on the walnut- 770
 tree over the wall,
 Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-wired
 leaves,
 Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical firs,
 Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon,
 through the office or public hall;
 Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign, pleas'd
 with the new and old,
 Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the handsome,
 Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and
 talks melodiously,
 Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of the whitewash'd church,
 Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist
 preacher, impress'd seriously at the camp-meeting; ³
 Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole fore-
 noon, flatting the flesh of my nose on the thick plate glass,

¹ A small American bird of quick movement, related to the swift.

² An American locustid (insect), named for the sound it makes.

³ A western encampment for religious meetings.

Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up to the clouds, or down a lane or along the beach, 78
My right and left arms round the sides of two friends, and I
in the middle;
Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy,
(behind me he rides at the drape of the day,)
Far from the settlements studying the print of animals' feet,
or the moccasin print,
By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a feverish
patient,
Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining with a
candle;
Voyaging to every port to dicker¹ and adventure,
Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and fickle as any,
Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him,
Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from
me a long while,
Walking the old hills of Judaea with the beautiful gentle God 790
by my side,
Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the
stars,
Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and
the diameter of eighty thousand miles,
Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-balls like the
rest,
Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother in
its belly,
Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,
Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,
I tread day and night such roads.

I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,
And look at quintillions ripen'd and look at quintillions
green.

I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul, 800
My course runs below the soundings of plummets.

I help myself to material and immaterial,
No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me.

I anchor my ship for a little while only,
My messengers continually cruise away or bring their returns
to me.

¹ To barter, to haggle.

I go hunting polar furs and the seal, leaping chasms with a
pike-pointed staff, clinging to topples of brittle and blue.

I ascend to the foretruck,
I take my place late at night in the crow's-nest,
We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough,
Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the won- 810
derful beauty,
The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them, the
scenery is plain in all directions,
The white-topt mountains show in the distance, I fling out
my fancies toward them,
We are approaching some great battle-field in which we are
soon to be engaged,
We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment, we pass
with still feet and caution,
Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and ruin'd city,
The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the living
cities of the globe.

I am a free companion, I bivouac by invading watchfires,
I turn the bridegroom out of bed and stay with the bride
myself,
I tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of the 820
stairs,
They fetch my man's body up dripping and drown'd.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,
The courage of present times and all times,
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of
the steamship,¹ and Death chasing it up and down the
storm,
How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was
faithful of days and faithful of nights,
And chalk'd in large letters on a board, *Be of good cheer, we
will not desert you*;
How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three days
and would not give it up,
How he saved the drifting company at last,

¹ The *San Francisco*, which sailed from New York for San Francisco 22nd December 1853. When she broke a piston and became helpless in a storm, the *Three Bells* brought two hundred and thirty of her survivors to New York.

How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated
from the side of their prepared graves,
How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and the 830
sharp-lipp'd unshaved men;
All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it becomes
mine,
I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.

The disdain and calmness of martyrs,
The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry
wood, her children gazing on,
The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the fence,
blowing, cover'd with sweat,
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck, the
murderous buckshot and the bullets,
All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the
marksmen,
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd with the 840
ooze of my skin,
I fall on the weeds and stones,
The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,
Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head with
whip-stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments,
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself be-
come the wounded person,
My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,
Tumbling walls buried me in their debris,
Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts of my
comrades,
I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels, 850
They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly lift me forth.
I lie in the night air in my red shirt, the pervading hush is for
my sake,
Painless after all I lie exhausted but not so unhappy,
White and beautiful are the faces around me, the heads are
bared of their fire-caps,
The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches.

Distant and dead resuscitate,
They show as the dial or move as the hands of me, I am the
clock myself.

I am an old artillerist, I tell of my fort's bombardment,
I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers,
Again the attacking cannon, mortars,
Again to my listening ears the cannon responsive.

860

I take part, I see and hear the whole,
The cries, curses, roar, the plaudits for well-aim'd shots,
The ambulanza¹ slowly passing trailing its red drip,
Workmen searching after damages, making indispensable
repairs,
The fall of grenades through the rent roof, the fan-shaped
explosion,
The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high in the
air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general, he furiously
waves with his hand,
He gasps through the clot *Mind not me—mind—the entrench-*
ments.

870

34

Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth,
(I tell not the fall of Alamo,²
Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo,)
Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and
twelve young men.³
Retreating they had form'd in a hollow square with their bag-
gage for breastworks,
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, nine
times their number, was the price they took in ad-
vance,

¹ Italian for *ambulance*.

² Famous battle at San Antonio in the war for Texan
Independence.

³ Near Goliad. Whitman is identifying himself with what
he has read.

Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,
They treated for an honorable capitulation, receiv'd writing
and seal, gave up their arms and march'd back prisoners
of war.¹

They were the glory of the race of rangers, 88
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affection-
ate,
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second First-day morning they were brought out in
squad and massacred, it was beautiful early summer,
The work commenced about five o'clock and was over by
eight.

None obey'd the command to kneel,
Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark and
straight,
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living and
dead lay together,
The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers saw 890
them there,
Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,
These were dispatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the
blunts of muskets.
A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two
more came to release him,
The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.
At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies;
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve
young men.

35

Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight? ²
Would you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?
List to the yarn, as my grandmother's father the sailor told it
to me.

¹ Battle at San Jacinto.

² Battle between the *Bon Homme Richard*, John Paul Jones, Com., and the *Serapis*, Richard Pearson, Com., on 23rd September 1779.

Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you, (said he,) 900
His was the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher or
truer, and never was, and never will be;
Along the lower'd eve he came horribly raking us.

We closed with him, the yards entangled, the cannon
touch'd,
My captain lash'd fast with his own hands.

We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots under the water,
On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the first
fire, killing all around and blowing up overhead.

Fighting at sun-down, fighting at dark,
Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up, our leaks on the
gain, and five feet of water reported,
The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the
after-hold to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine is now stopt by the 910
sentinels,
They see so many strange faces they do not know whom to
trust.

Our frigate takes fire,
The other asks if we demand quarter?
If our colors are struck and the fighting done?

Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of my little captain,
We have not struck, he composedly cries, *we have just begun*
our part of the fighting.

Only three guns are in use,
One is directed by the captain himself against the enemy's
main-mast,
Two well serv'd with grape and canister silence his musketry
and clear his decks.
The tops alone second the fire of this little battery, especially 920
the main-top,
They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease,
The leaks gain fast on the pumps, the fire eats toward the
powder-magazine.

One of the pumps has been shot away, it is generally thought
we are sinking.

Serene stands the little captain,
He is not hurried, his voice is neither high nor low,
His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

Toward twelve there in the beams of the moon they surrender
to us.

36

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness, 930
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to pass
to the one we have conquer'd,
The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders
through a countenance white as a sheet,
Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and care-
fully curl'd whiskers,
The flames spite of all that can be done flickering aloft and
below,
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for duty,
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs of
flesh upon the masts and spars,
Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the soothe
of waves,
Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-parcels, strong
scent,
A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining, 940
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and fields
by the shore, death-messages given in charge to sur-
vivors,
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and
long, dull, tapering groan,
These so, these irretrievable.

37

You laggards there on guard! look to your arms!
In at the conquer'd doors they crowd! I am possess'd!
Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,
See myself in prison shaped like another man,
And feel the dull unintermitted pain,

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and 950
keep watch,
It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd
to him and walk by his side,
(I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one with
sweat on my twitching lips.)

Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too, and am
tried and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp but I also lie at the
last gasp,
My face is ash-color'd, my sinews gnarl, away from me
people retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me and I am embodied in
them,
I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.

38

Enough! enough! enough!
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back! 960
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers,
dreams, gaping,
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.
That I could forget the mockers and insults!
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the
bludgeons and hammers!
That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion
and bloody crowning!

I remember now,
I resume the overstaid fraction,
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it, or
to any graves,
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an 970
average unending procession,
Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of
years.

Eleves,¹ I salute you! come forward!
Continue your annotations, continue your questionings.

39

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?

Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors? is he Kanadian?
Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon, California?

The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor from the sea? 980

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them,
stay with them.

Behavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass, un-
comb'd head, laughter, and naivetè,
Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes and
emanations,

They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,
They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath, they fly
out of the glance of his eyes.

40

Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—lie over!
You light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,
Say, old top-knot,² what do you want? 990

Man or woman, I might tell you I like you, but cannot,
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in you, but
cannot,
And might tell that pining I have, that pulse of my nights and
days.

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,
When I give I give myself.

You there, impotent, loose in the knees,
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you,

¹ French for *pupils*.

² Slang for *head*.

Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,
I am not to be denied, I compel, I have stores plenty and to
spare,
And any thing I have I bestow.

1000

I do not ask who you are, that is not important to me,
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold
you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler
babes,
(This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics.)

To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob of the
door,
Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed,
Let the physician and the priest go home.

1010

I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will,
O despairer, here is my neck,
By God, you shall not go down! hang your whole weight
upon me.

I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,
Not doubt, not disease shall dare to lay finger upon you,
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to myself,
And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell
you is so.

1020

41

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs,
And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.

I heard what was said of the universe,
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years;
It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,
 Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,
 Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,
 Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his
 grandson,
 Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha, 1030
 In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the
 crucifix engraved,
 With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and
 image,
 Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,
 Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,
 (They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to rise
 and fly and sing for themselves,)
 Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself,
 bestowing them freely on each man and woman I see,
 Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,
 Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up sleeves
 driving the mallet and chisel,
 Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of
 smoke or a hair on the back of my hand just as curious
 as any revelation,
 Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less 1040
 to me than the gods of the antique wars,
 Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,
 Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths, their
 white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames;
 By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple interced-
 ing for every person born,
 Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty
 angels with shirts bagg'd out at their waists,
 The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past
 and to come,
 Selling all he possesses, traveling on foot to fee lawyers for
 his brother and sit by him while he is tried for forgery;
 What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod
 about me, and not filling the square rod then,
 The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,
 Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,
 The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time to 1050
 be one of the supremes,
 The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good
 as the best, and be as prodigious;
 By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator,
 Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the
 shadows.

A call in the midst of the crowd,
My own voice, orotund sweeping and final.

Come my children,
Come my boys and girls, my women, household and intimates,
Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd his prelude on the reeds within.

Easily written loose-finger'd chords—I feel the thrum of your climax and close.

My head slues round on my neck, 1060
Music rolls, but not from the organ,
Folks are around me, but they are no household of mine.

Ever the hard unsunk ground,
Ever the eaters and drinkers, ever the upward and downward sun, ever the air and the ceaseless tides,
Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing, wicked, real,
Ever the old inexplicable query, ever that thorn'd thumb, that breath of itches and thirsts,
Ever the vexer's *hoot! hoot!* till we find where the sly one hides and bring him forth,
Ever love, ever the sobbing liquid of life,
Ever the bandage under the chin, ever the trestles¹ of death.

Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking, 1070
To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,
Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast never once going,
Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff for payment receiving,
A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens,
Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars, markets, newspapers, schools,
The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships, factories, stocks, stores, real estate and personal estate.

¹ Supports for a coffin. See *Beat! Beat! Drums!*, p. 237.

The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and
tail'd coats,
I am aware who they are, (they are positively not worms or
fleas,)
I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest and 1080
shallowest is deathless with me,
What I do and say the same waits for them,
Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders in
them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism,
Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less,
And would fetch you whoever you are flush with myself.

Not words of routine this song of mine,
But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring;
This printed and bound book—but the printer and the
printing-office boy?

The well-taken photographs—but your wife or friend close
and solid in your arms?

The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her 1090
turrets—but the pluck of the captain and engineers?

In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture—but the host
and hostess, and the look out of their eyes?

The sky up there—yet here or next door, or across the way?

The saints and sages in history—but you yourself?

Sermons, creeds, theology—but the fathomless human
brain,

And what is reason? and what is love? and what is life?

43

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between
ancient and modern,

Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thou-
sand years,

Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting 1100
the sun,

Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powowing¹ with
sticks in the circle of obis,²

Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the
idols,

¹ Indian medicine-man's conjuring or incantation.

² African sorcery.

Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt
and austere in the woods a gymnosophist,
Drinking mead from the skull-cap, to Shastas and Vedas
admirant, minding the Koran,
Walking the teokallis,¹ spotted with gore from the stone and
knife, beating the serpent-skin drum,
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified,
knowing assuredly that he is divine,
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting
patiently in a pew,
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like
till my spirit arouses me,
Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement
and land,
Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.

1110

One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and talk
like a man leaving charges before a journey.

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd,
atheistical,
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt,
despair and unbelief.

How the flukes² splash!
How they contort rapid as lightning, with spasms and spouts
of blood!

Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers,
I take my place among you as much as among any,
The past is the push of you, me, all, precisely the same,
And what is yet untried and afterward is for you, me, all 1120
precisely the same.

I do not know what is untried and afterward,
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient, and cannot fail.

Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is consider'd,
not a single one can it fail.

¹ Mexican or Central American pyramidal mound or the temple which surmounted it.

² Tail of a whale.

It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,
 Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,
 Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then drew
 back and was never seen again,
 Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels it
 with bitterness worse than gall,
 Nor him in the poor house ¹ tubercled by rum and the bad
 disorder,
 Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd, nor the brutish
 koboo call'd the ordure of humanity,
 Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to 1130
 slip in,
 Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of
 the earth,
 Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads of
 myriads that inhabit them,
 Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

44

It is time to explain myself—let us stand up.

What is known I strip away,
 I launch all men and women forward with me into the Un-
 known.

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity indicate?

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers,
 There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,
 And other births will bring us richness and variety.

1140

I do not call one greater and one smaller,
 That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother,
 my sister?

I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous upon me,

All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with lamenta-
 tion,

¹ A publicly maintained dwelling for paupers.

(What have I to do with lamentation?)

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between 1150
the steps,
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even
there,
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic
mist,
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful
boatmen,
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings, 1160
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and de-
posited it with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and de-
light me,
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

O span of youth! ever-push'd elasticity!
O manhood, balanced, florid and full.
My lovers suffocate me,
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,

Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked to
me at night,
Crying by day *Ahoy!* from the rocks of the river, swinging
and chirping over my head,
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled under-
brush,
Lighting on every moment of my life,
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,
Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving
them to be mine.

Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace of dying 1180
days!

Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what
grows after and out of itself,
And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the
rim of the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,
Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside
them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage, 1190
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their sur-
faces, were this moment reduced back to a pallid float,
it would not avail in the long run,
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues,
do not hazard the span or make it impatient,
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.
See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.
My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be 1200
there.

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never
measured and never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut
from the woods,
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
My left hand hooking you round the waist,
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the
public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you, 1210
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not
know,
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds¹ dear son, and I will mine, and let us
hasten forth,
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of your
hand on my hip,
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,
For after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the 1220
crowded heaven,
And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders of those
orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of every thing in
them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?*
And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and con-
tinue beyond.*

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,
I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for yourself.

¹ Wearing apparel, small belongings.

Sit a while dear son,
Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,
But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes,
I kiss you with a good-by kiss and open the gate for your
egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of 1230
every moment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me,
shout, and laughingly dash with your hair.

47

I am the teacher of athletes,
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves
the width of my own,
He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the
teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through derived
power, but in his own right,
Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than sharp 1240
steel cuts,
First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a skiff,
to sing a song or play on the banjo,
Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with small-
pox over all latherers,
And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?
I follow you whoever you are from the present hour,
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the time
while I wait for a boat,
(It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of
you,
Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd.)

I swear I will never again mention love or death inside a house, 1250

And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to him or her who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-shore,

The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of waves a key,

The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,
But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take me with him all day,

The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound of my voice,

In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and seamen and love them. 1260

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,
On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and I do not fail them,

On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that know me seek me.

My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone in his blanket,

The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his wagon,

The young mother and old mother comprehend me,

The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget where they are,

They and all would resume what I have told them.

48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,

And I have said that the body is not more than the soul, 1270

And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,

And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud,

And I or you pocketless of a dime¹ may purchase the pick of the earth,

¹ A ten-cent piece.

And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod con-
founds the learning of all times,
And there is no trade or employment but the young man fol-
lowing it may become a hero,
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the
wheel'd universe,
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool
and composed before a million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about 1280
God and about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God
not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than
myself.
Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and
each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own
face in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is
sign'd by God's name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er
I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is
idle to try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur¹ comes, 1290
I see the elder-hand pressing receiving supporting,
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that
does not offend me,
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of
melons.

¹ Obstetrician.

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many
deaths,
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and pro- 1300
motions,
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing?

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the souging twi-
light,
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black stems that
decay in the muck,
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.
I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams
reflected,
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring
great or small.

50

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it
is in me.

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body be- 1310
comes,
I sleep—I sleep long.

I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid,
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me.

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my brothers
and sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal
life—it is Happiness.

51

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future. 1320

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a
minute longer.)

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-
slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through
with his supper?

Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too 1330
late?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains
of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp¹ over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the
shadow'd wilds,
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles. 1340

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

1855

1881

¹ A yelp or bark, as of a dog. Possibly a boast.

Children of Adam

TO THE GARDEN THE WORLD

To the garden the world anew ascending,
Potent mates, daughters, sons, preluding,
The love, the life of their bodies, meaning and being,
Curious here behold my resurrection after slumber,
The revolving cycles in their wide sweep having brought me
again,
Amorous, mature, all beautiful to me, all wondrous,
My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through them,
for reasons, most wondrous,
Existing I peer and penetrate still,
Content with the present, content with the past,
By my side or back of me Eve following,
Or in front, and I following her just the same.

1860

1867

10

FROM PENT-UP ACHING RIVERS

FROM pent-up aching rivers,
From that of myself without which I were nothing,
From what I am determin'd to make illustrious, even if I
stand sole among men,
From my own voice resonant, singing the phallus,
Singing the song of procreation,
Singing the need of superb children and therein superb grown
people,
Singing the muscular urge and the blending,
Singing the bedfellow's song, (O resistless yearning!
O for any and each the body correlative attracting!
O for you whoever you are your correlative body! O it,
more than all else, you delighting!)

FROM the hungry gnaw that eats me night and day,
From native moments, from bashful pains, singing them,
Seeking something yet unfound though I have diligently
sought it many a long year,
Singing the true song of the soul fitful at random,
Renascent with grossest Nature or among animals,

10

Of that, of them and what goes with them my poems in-
 forming,
 Of the smell of apples and lemons, of the pairing of birds,
 Of the wet of woods, of the lapping of waves,
 Of the mad pushes of waves upon the land, I them chanting,
 The overture lightly sounding, the strain anticipating, 20
 The welcome nearness, the sight of the perfect body,
 The swimmer swimming naked in the bath, or motionless on
 his back lying and floating,
 The female form approaching, I pensive, love-flesh tremulous
 aching,
 The divine list for myself or you or for any one making,
 The face, the limbs, the index from head to foot, and what it
 arouses,
 The mystic deliria, the madness amorous, the utter abandon-
 ment,
 (Hark close and still what I now whisper to you,
 I love you, O you entirely possess me,
 O that you and I escape from the rest and go utterly off, free
 and lawless,
 Two hawks in the air, two fishes swimming in the sea not 30
 more lawless than we;)
 The furious storm through me careering, I passionately
 trembling,
 The oath of the inseparableness of two together, of the
 woman that loves me and whom I love more than my
 life, that oath swearing,
 (O I willingly stake all for you,
 O let me be lost if it must be so!
 O you and I! what is it to us what the rest do or think?
 What is all else to us? only that we enjoy each other and ex-
 haust each other if it must be so;)
 From the master, the pilot I yield the vessel to,
 The general commanding me, commanding all, from him
 permission taking,
 From time the programme hastening, (I have loiter'd too
 long as it is,) 40
 From sex, from the warp and from the woof,
 From privacy, from frequent repinings alone,
 From plenty of persons near and yet the right person not
 near,
 From the soft sliding of hands over me and thrusting of
 fingers through my hair and beard,
 From the long sustain'd kiss upon the mouth or bosom,
 From the close pressure that makes me or any man drunk,
 fainting with excess,

From what the divine husband knows, from the work of
 fatherhood,
 From exultation, victory and relief from the bedfellow's
 embrace in the night,
 From the act-poems of eyes, hands, hips and bosoms,
 From the cling of the trembling arm,
 From the bending curve and the clinch,
 From side by side the pliant coverlet off-throwing,
 From the one so unwilling to have me leave, and me just as
 unwilling to leave,
 (Yet a moment O tender waiter, and I return,)
 From the hour of shining stars and dropping dews,
 From the night a moment I emerging flitting out,
 Celebrate you act divine and you children prepared for,
 And you stalwart loins.

1860

1881

50

I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC

I

I SING the body electric,
 The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them,
 They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,
 And dis corrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of
 the soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves?

And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who defile the dead?

And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?

And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul? ✓

2

The love of the body of man or woman balks account, the
 body itself balks account,

That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is perfect. 10

The expression of the face balks account,

But the expression of a well-made man appears not only in his face,

It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists,

It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist
and knees, dress does not hide him,
The strong sweet quality he has strikes through the cotton
and broadcloth,
To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps
more,
You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and
shoulder-side.

The sprawl and fulness of babes, the bosoms and heads of
women, the folds of their dress, their style as we pass in
the street, the contour of their shape downwards,
The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as he
swims through the transparent green-shine, or lies with
his face up and rolls silently to and fro in the heave of
the water,
The bending forward and backward of rowers in row-boats, 20
the horseman in his saddle,
Girls, mothers, house-keepers, in all their performances,
The group of laborers seated at noon-time with their open
dinner-kettles, and their wives waiting,
The female soothing a child, the farmer's daughter in the
garden or cow-yard,
The young fellow hoeing corn, the sleigh-driver driving his
six horses through the crowd,
The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite grown,
lusty, good-natured, native-born, out on the vacant lot
at sundown after work,
The coats and caps thrown down, the embrace of love and
resistance,
The upper-hold and under-hold, the hair rumped over and
blinding the eyes;
The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play of
masculine muscle through clean-setting trowsers and
waist-straps,
The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell strikes
suddenly again, and the listening on the alert,
The natural, perfect, varied attitudes, the bent head, the 30
curv'd neck and the counting;¹
Such-like I love—I loosen myself, pass freely, am at the
mother's breast with the little child,
Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march in
line with the firemen, and pause, listen, count.

¹ In American villages the number of strokes of the fire bell indicates the location of the fire.

I knew a man, a common farmer, the father of five sons,
And in them the fathers of sons, and in them the fathers of
sons.

This man was of wonderful vigor, calmness, beauty of person,
The shape of his head, the pale yellow and white of his hair
and beard, the immeasurable meaning of his black eyes,
the richness and breadth of his manners,

These I used to go and visit him to see, he was wise also,
He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old, his sons
were massive, clean, bearded, tan-faced, handsome,
They and his daughters loved him, all who saw him loved him,
They did not love him by allowance, they loved him with
personal love,

He drank water only, the blood show'd like scarlet through
the clear-brown skin of his face,

He was a frequent gunner and fisher, he sail'd his boat him-
self, he had a fine one presented to him by a ship-joiner,
he had fowling-pieces presented to him by men that
loved him,

When he went with his five sons and many grand-sons to
hunt or fish, you would pick him out as the most beauti-
ful and vigorous of the gang,

You would wish long and long to be with him, you would
wish to sit by him in the boat that you and he might
touch each other.

40

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like is enough,
To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,
To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing
flesh is enough,

To pass among them or touch any one, or rest my arm ever
so lightly round his or her neck for a moment, what is
this then?

I do not ask any more delight, I swim in it as in a sea.

There is something in staying close to men and women and
looking on them, and in the contact and odor of them,
that pleases the soul well,

All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

50

This is the female form,
 A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,
 It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction,
 I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a helpless
 vapor, all falls aside but myself and it,
 Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth, and
 what was expected of heaven or fear'd of hell, are now
 consumed,
 Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it, the re-
 sponse likewise ungovernable,
 Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands all
 diffused, mine too diffused,
 Ebb stung by the flow and flow stung by the ebb, love-flesh
 swelling and deliciously aching,
 Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering 60
 jelly of love, white-blow and delirious juice,
 Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly into the
 prostrate dawn,
 Undulating into the willing and yielding day,
 Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-flesh'd day.

This the nucleus—after the child is born of woman, man is
 born of woman,
 This the bath of birth, this the merge of small and large, and
 the outlet again.

Be not ashamed women, your privilege encloses the rest, and
 is the exit of the rest,
 You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the soul.

The female contains all qualities and tempers them,
 She is in her place and moves with perfect balance,
 She is all things duly veil'd, she is both passive and active, 70
 She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and sons as well
 as daughters.

As I see my soul reflected in Nature,
 As I see through a mist, One with inexpressible completeness,
 sanity, beauty,
 See the bent head and arms folded over the breast, the Female
 I see.

The male is not less the soul nor more, he too is in his place,
 He too is all qualities, he is action and power,
 The flush of the known universe is in him,

Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance become
him well,

The wildest largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow that
is utmost become him well, pride is for him,

The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent to the
soul,

Knowledge becomes him, he likes it always, he brings every
thing to the test of himself,

Whatever the survey, whatever the sea and the sail he strikes
soundings at last only here,

(Where else does he strike soundings except here?)

The man's body is sacred and the woman's body is sacred, ✓

No matter who it is, it is sacred—is it the meanest one in the
laborer's gang?

Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed on the
wharf?

Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the well-off,
just as much as you,

Each has his or her place in the procession.

(All is a procession,

The universe is a procession with measured and perfect
motion.) 90

Do you know so much yourself that you call the meanest
ignorant?

Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and he or
she has no right to a sight?

Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse
float, and the soil is on the surface, and water runs and
vegetation sprouts,

For you only, and not for him and her?

7

A man's body at auction,

(For before the war I often go to the slave-mart¹ and watch
the sale,)

I help the auctioneer, the sloven does not half know his
business.

Gentlemen look on this wonder,

Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high enough
for it,

¹ Probably in New Orleans. Slavery had been abolished in
New York.

For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years without 100
one animal or plant,
For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

In this head the all-baffling brain,
In it and below it the makings of heroes.

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white, they are cunning in
tendon and nerve,
They shall be stript that you may see them.
Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,
Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh not
flabby, good-sized arms and legs,
And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,
The same old blood! the same red-running blood! 110
There swells and jets a heart, there all passions, desires,
reachings, aspirations,
(Do you think they are not there because they are not ex-
press'd in parlors and lecture-rooms?)

This is not only one man, this the father of those who shall
be fathers in their turns,
In him the start of populous states and rich republics,
Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments
and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his
offspring through the centuries?
(Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you
could trace back through the centuries?)

8

A woman's body at auction,
She too is not only herself, she is the teeming mother of
mothers,
She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the 120
mothers.

Have you ever loved the body of a woman?
Have you ever loved the body of a man?
Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all in all
nations and times all over the earth?

If any thing is sacred the human body is sacred,
 And the glory and sweat of a man is the token of manhood
 untainted,
 And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body, is
 more beautiful than the most beautiful face.
 Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? or
 the fool that corrupted her own live body?
 For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal
 themselves.

9

O my body! I dare not desert the likes of you in other men
 and women, nor the likes of the parts of you,
 I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the likes of 130
 the soul, (and that they are the soul,)
 I believe the likes of you shall stand or fall with my poems,
 and that they are my poems,
 Man's, woman's, child's, youth's, wife's, husband's, mother's,
 father's, young man's, young woman's poems,
 Head, neck, hair, ears, drop and tympan of the ears,
 Eyes, eye-fringes, iris of the eye, eyebrows, and the waking or
 sleeping of the lids,
 Mouth, tongue, lips, teeth, roof of the mouth, jaws, and the
 jaw-hinges,
 Nose, nostrils of the nose, and the partition,
 Cheeks, temples, forehead, chin, throat, back of the neck,
 neck-slue,
 Strong shoulders, manly beard, scapula, hind-shoulders, and
 the ample side-round of the chest,
 Upper-arm, armpit, elbow-socket, lower-arm, arm-sinews,
 arm-bones,
 Wrist and wrist-joints, hand, palm, knuckles, thumb, fore- 140
 finger, finger-joints, finger-nails,
 Broad breast-front, curling hair of the breast, breast-bone,
 breast-side,
 Ribs, belly, backbone, joints of the backbone,
 Hips, hip-sockets, hip-strength, inward and outward round,
 man-balls, man-root,
 Strong set of thighs, well carrying the trunk above,
 Leg-fibres, knee, knee-pan, upper-leg, under-leg,
 Ankles, instep, foot-ball, toes, toe-joints, the heel;
 All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the belongings of my or
 your body or of any one's body, male or female,
 The lung-sponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels sweet and
 clean,

The brain in its folds inside the skull-frame,
Sympathies, heart-valves, palate-valves, sexuality, maternity, 150
Womanhood and all that is a woman, and the man that
comes from woman,

The womb, the teats, nipples, breast-milk, tears, laughter,
weeping, love-looks, love-perturbations and risings,

The voice, articulation, language, whispering, shouting aloud,
Food, drink, pulse, digestion, sweat, sleep, walking, swim-
ming,

Poise on the hips, leaping, reclining, embracing, arm-curving
and tightening,

The continual changes of the flex of the mouth, and around
the eyes,

The skin, the sunburnt shade, freckles, hair,

The curious sympathy one feels when feeling with the hand
the naked meat of the body,

The circling rivers the breath, and breathing it in and out,

The beauty of the waist, and thence of the hips, and thence 160
downward toward the knees,

The thin red jellies within you or within me, the bones and
the marrow in the bones,

The exquisite realization of health;

O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only,
but of the soul,

O I say now these are the soul!

1855

1881

A WOMAN WAITS FOR ME

A WOMAN waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,
Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of
the right man were lacking.

Sex contains all, bodies, souls,

Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulga-
tions,

Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the
seminal milk,

All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves,
beauties, delights of the earth,

All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the
earth,

These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and justifications
of itself.

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex,
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.

10

Now I will dismiss myself from impassive women,
I will go stay with her who waits for me, and with those women that are warm-blooded and sufficient for me,
I see that they understand me and do not deny me,
I see that they are worthy of me, I will be the robust husband of those women.

They are not one jot less than I am,
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike, retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,
They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear, well-possess'd of themselves.

I draw you close to me, you women,
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own sake, but for others' sakes,
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.

20

It is I, you women, I make my way,
I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable, but I love you,
I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,
I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these States,
I press with slow rude muscle,
I brace myself effectually, I listen to no entreaties,
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long accumulated within me.

30

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of me and America,
The drops I distil upon you shall grow fierce and athletic girls, new artists, musicians, and singers,
The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in their turn,
I shall demand perfect men and women out of my love-spending,

I shall expect them to interpenetrate with others, as I and you
interpenetrate now,
I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of them, as
I count on the fruits of the gushing showers I give now,
I shall look for loving crops from the birth, life, death, im-
mortality, I plant so lovingly now.

1856

1871

SPONTANEOUS ME

SPONTANEOUS me, Nature,
The loving day, the mounting sun, the friend I am happy
with,
The arm of my friend hanging idly over my shoulder,
The hillside whiten'd with blossoms of the mountain ash,
The same late in autumn, the hues of red, yellow, drab,
purple, and light and dark green,
The rich coverlet of the grass, animals and birds, the private
untrimm'd bank, the primitive apples, the pebble-stones,
Beautiful dripping fragments, the negligent list of one after
another as I happen to call them to me or think of them,
The real poems, (what we call poems being merely pictures,)
The poems of the privacy of the night, and of men like me,
This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry, and
that all men carry, 10
(Know once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men like
me, are our lusty lurking masculine poems,)
Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yielding, love-
climbers, and the climbing sap,
Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of love,
breasts of love, bellies press'd and glued together with
love,
Earth of chaste love, life that is only life after love,
The body of my love, the body of the woman I love, the body
of the man, the body of the earth,
Soft forenoon airs that blow from the south-west,
The hairy wild-bee that murmurs and hankers up and down,
that gripes the full-grown lady-flower, curves upon her
with amorous firm legs, takes his will of her, and holds
himself tremulous and tight till he is satisfied;
The wet of woods through the early hours,
Two sleepers at night lying close together as they sleep, one
with an arm slanting down across and below the waist of
the other,

The smell of apples, aromas from crush'd sage-plant, mint, 20
 birch-bark,
 The boy's longings, the glow and pressure as he confides to
 me what he was dreaming,
 The dead leaf whirling its spiral whirl and falling still and
 content to the ground,
 The no-form'd stings that sights, people, objects, sting me
 with,
 The hubb'd sting of myself, stinging me as much as it ever
 can any one,
 The sensitive, orbic, underlapp'd brothers, that only privi-
 leged feelers may be intimate where they are,
 The curious roamer the hand roaming all over the body, the
 bashful withdrawing of flesh where the fingers soothingly
 pause and edge themselves,
 The limpid liquid within the young man,
 The vex'd corrosion so pensive and so painful,
 The torment, the irritable tide that will not be at rest,
 The like of the same I feel, the like of the same in others, 30
 The young man that flushes and flushes, and the young
 woman that flushes and flushes,
 The young man that wakes deep at night, the hot hand seek-
 ing to repress what would master him,
 The mystic amorous night, the strange half-welcome pangs,
 visions, sweats,
 The pulse pounding through palms and trembling encirc-
 ling fingers, the young man all color'd, red, ashamed,
 angry;
 The souse upon me of my lover the sea, as I lie willing and
 naked,
 The merriment of the twin babies that crawl over the grass in
 the sun, the mother never turning her vigilant eyes from
 them,
 The walnut-trunk, the walnut-husks, and the ripening or
 ripen'd long-round walnuts,
 The continence of vegetables, birds, animals,
 The consequent meanness of me should I skulk or find myself
 indecent, while birds and animals never once skulk or
 find themselves indecent,
 The great chastity of paternity, to match the great chastity of 40
 maternity,
 The oath of procreation I have sworn, my Adamic and fresh
 daughters,
 The greed that eats me day and night with hungry gnaw, till
 I saturate what shall produce boys to fill my place when
 I am through,

The wholesome relief, repose, content,
And this bunch pluck'd at random from myself,
It has done its work—I toss it carelessly to fall where it may.

1856

1867

ONE HOUR TO MADNESS AND JOY

ONE hour to madness and joy! O furious! O confine me not!
(What is this that frees me so in storms?
What do my shouts amid lightnings and raging winds mean?)

O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other man!
O savage and tender achings! (I bequeath them to you, my
children,
I tell them to you, for reasons, O bridegroom and bride.)

O to be yielded to you whoever you are, and you to be yielded
to me in defiance of the world!
O to return to Paradise! O bashful and feminine!
O to draw you to me, to plant on you for the first time the
lips of a determin'd man.

O the puzzle, the thrice-tied knot, the deep and dark pool, all
untied and illumin'd!

O to speed where there is space enough and air enough at
last!

To be absolv'd from previous ties and conventions, I from
mine and you from yours!

To find a new unthought-of nonchalance with the best of
Nature!

To have the gag remov'd from one's mouth!

To have the feeling to-day or any day I am sufficient as I am.

O something unprov'd! something in a trance!

To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds!

To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless and dangerous!

To court destruction with taunts, with invitations!

To ascend, to leap to the heavens of the love indicated to me!

To rise thither with my inebriate soul!

To be lost if it must be so!

To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fulness and
freedom!

With one brief hour of madness and joy.

1860

1881

OUT OF THE ROLLING OCEAN THE CROWD

OUT of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop gently to me,
Whispering *I love you, before long I die,*
I have travel'd a long way merely to look on you to touch you,
For I could not die till I once look'd on you,
For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,
Return in peace to the ocean my love,
I too am part of that ocean my love, we are not so much
separated,

Behold the great rondure,¹ the cohesion of all, how perfect!
But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us,
As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot carry us di-
verse forever;

Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute the air,
the ocean and the land,

Every day at sundown for your dear sake my love.

1865

1867

10

AGES AND AGES RETURNING AT INTERVALS

AGES and ages returning at intervals,
Undestroy'd, wandering immortal,
Lusty, phallic, with the potent original loins, perfectly sweet,
I, chanter of Adamic songs,
Through the new garden the West, the great cities calling,
Deliriate, thus prelude what is generated, offering these,
offering myself,
Bathing myself, bathing my songs in Sex,
Offspring of my loins.

1860

1867

WE TWO, HOW LONG WE WERE FOOL'D

WE two, how long we were fool'd,
Now transmuted, we swiftly escape as Nature escapes,
We are Nature, long have we been absent, but now we return,
We become plants, trunks, foliage, roots, bark,
We are bedded in the ground, we are rocks,

¹ The earth.

We are oaks, we grow in the openings side by side,
 We browse, we are two among the wild herds spontaneous as
 any,
 We are two fishes swimming in the sea together,
 We are what locust blossoms are, we drop scent around lanes
 mornings and evenings,
 We are also the coarse smut of beasts, vegetables, minerals,
 We are two predatory hawks, we soar above and look down,
 We are two resplendent suns, we it is who balance ourselves
 orbic and stellar, we are as two comets,
 We prowl fang'd and four-footed in the woods, we spring on
 prey,
 We are two clouds forenoons and afternoons driving over-
 head,
 We are seas mingling, we are two of those cheerful waves
 rolling over each other and interwetting each other,
 We are what the atmosphere is, transparent, receptive, per-
 vious, impervious,
 We are snow, rain, cold, darkness, we are each product and
 influence of the globe,
 We have circled and circled till we have arrived home again,
 we two,
 We have voided all but freedom and all but our own joy.

1860

1881

O HYMEN! O HYMENEE!¹

O HYMEN! O hymenees! why do you tantalize me thus?
 O why sting me for a swift moment only?
 Why can you not continue? O why do you now cease?
 Is it because if you continued beyond the swift moment you
 would soon certainly kill me?

1860

1867

I AM HE THAT ACHES WITH LOVE

I AM he that aches with amorous love;
 Does the earth gravitate? does not all matter, aching, attract
 all matter?
 So the body of me to all I meet or know.

1860

1867

¹ The feminine form of the word is a Whitman coinage.

NATIVE MOMENTS

NATIVE moments—when you come upon me—ah you are
here now,
Give me now libidinous joys only,
Give me the drench of my passions, give me life coarse and
rank,
To-day I go consort with Nature's darlings, to-night too,
I am for those who believe in loose delights, I share the mid-
night orgies of young men,
I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers,
The echoes ring with our indecent calls, I pick out some low
person for my dearest friend,
He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one con-
demned by others for deeds done,
I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself from
my companions?
O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,
I will be more to you than to any of the rest. ,,

1860

1881

10

ONCE I PASS'D THROUGH A POPULOUS CITY

ONCE I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain
for future use with its shows, architecture, customs,
traditions,
Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman I casually
met there who detain'd me for love of me,
Day by day and night by night we were together—all else has
long been forgotten by me,
I remember I say only that woman who passionately clung to
me,
Again we wander, we love, we separate again,
Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,
I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and tremulous.

1860

1867


I HEARD YOU SOLEMN-SWEET PIPES OF THE ORGAN

I HEARD you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ as last Sunday
morn I pass'd the church,
Winds of autumn, as I walk'd the woods at dusk I heard your
long-stretch'd sighs up above so mournful,

I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera, I heard
the soprano in the midst of the quartet singing;
Heart of my love! you too I heard murmuring low through
one of the wrists around my head,
Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little bells
last night under my ear.

1861

1867



FACING WEST FROM CALIFORNIA'S SHORES

FACING west from California's shores,
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of mater-
nity, the land of migrations, look afar,
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost
circled;
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of
Kashmere,¹
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the
hero,
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice
islands,
Long having wander'd since, round the earth having wan-
der'd,
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,
(But where is what I started for so long ago?
And why is it yet unfound?)

1860

1867

10

AS ADAM EARLY IN THE MORNING

As Adam early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass,
Be not afraid of my body.

1860

1867

¹ Kashmir.

Calamus

IN PATHS UNTRODDEN

IN paths untrodden,
In the growths by margins of pond-waters,
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,
From all the standards hitherto publish'd, from the pleasures,
 profits, conformities,
Which too long I was offering to feed my soul,
Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to me that
 my soul,
That the soul of the man I speak for rejoices in comrades,
Here by myself away from the clank of the world,
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,
No longer abash'd, (for in this secluded spot I can respond as 10
 I would not dare elsewhere,)
Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself, yet contains all the rest,
Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment,
Projecting them along that substantial life,
Bequeathing hence types of athletic love,
Afternoon this delicious Ninth-month in my forty-first year,
I proceed for all who are or have been young men,
To tell the secret of my nights and days,
To celebrate the need of comrades.

1860

1867

SCENTED HERBAGE OF MY BREAST

SCENTED herbage of my breast,
Leaves from you I glean, I write, to be perused best afterwards,
Tomb-leaves, body-leaves growing up above me above death,
Perennial roots, tall leaves, O the winter shall not freeze you
 delicate leaves,
Every year shall you bloom again, out from where you retired
 you shall emerge again;
O I do not know whether many passing by will discover you
 or inhale your faint odor, but I believe a few will;

O slender leaves! O blossoms of my blood! I permit you to
 tell in your own way of the heart that is under you,
 O I do not know what you mean there underneath yourselves,
 you are not happiness,
 You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn and sting
 me,
 Yet you are beautiful to me you faint-tinged roots, you make 10
 me think of death,
 Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally beautiful
 except death and love?)
 O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of
 lovers, I think it must be for death,
 For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the atmo-
 sphere of lovers,
 Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines to prefer,
 (I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes death
 most,)
 Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the
 same as you mean,
 Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see! grow up out of
 my breast!
 Spring away from the conceal'd heart there!
 Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots timid
 leaves!
 Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my breast! 20
 Come I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of mine, I
 have long enough stifled and choked;
 Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you serve
 me not,
 I will say what I have to say by itself,
 I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never again
 utter a call only their call,
 I will raise with it immortal reverberations through the States,
 I will give an example to lovers to take permanent shape and
 will through the States,
 Through me shall the words be said to make death exhilarat-
 ing.
 Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord with
 it,
 Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now above
 all, and are folded inseparably together, you love and
 death are,
 Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I was 30
 calling life,
 For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports essen-
 tial,

That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons, and
 that they are mainly for you,
 That you beyond them come forth to remain, the real reality,
 That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no
 matter how long,
 That you will one day perhaps take control of all,
 That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of appear-
 ance,
 That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not last so
 very long,
 But you will last very long.

1860

1881

WHOEVER YOU ARE HOLDING ME NOW IN HAND

WHOEVER you are holding me now in hand,
 Without one thing all will be useless,
 I give you fair warning before you attempt me further,
 I am not what you supposed, but far different.

Who is he that would become my follower?
 Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?

The way is suspicious, the result uncertain, perhaps destruc-
 tive,
 You would have to give up all else, I alone would expect to
 be your sole and exclusive standard,
 Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,
 The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to the
 lives around you would have to be abandon'd,
 Therefore release me now before troubling yourself any fur-
 ther, let go your hand from my shoulders,
 Put me ¹ down and depart on your way.

Or else by stealth in some wood for trial,
 Or back of a rock in the open air,
 (For in any roof'd room of a house I emerge not, nor in com-
 pany,

¹ Compare *So Long!*, p. 411:

'Camerado, this is no book,
 Who touches this touches a man.'

And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn, or
dead,)

But just possibly with you on a high hill, first watching lest
any person for miles around approach unawares,

Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea
or some quiet island,

Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,

With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss or the new husband's
kiss,

For I am the new husband and I am the comrade.

20

Or if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,

Where I may feel the throbs of your heart or rest upon your
hip,

Carry me when you go forth over land or sea;

For thus merely touching you is enough, is best,

And thus touching you would I silently sleep and be carried
eternally.

But these leaves conning you con at peril,

For these leaves and me you will not understand,

They will elude you at first and still more afterward, I will
certainly elude you,

Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught
me, behold!

30

Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have written
this book,

Nor is it by reading it you will acquire it,

Nor do those know me best who admire me and vauntingly
praise me,

Nor will the candidates for my love (unless at most a very
few) prove victorious,

Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as much
evil, perhaps more,

For all is useless without that which you may guess at many
times and not hit, that which I hinted at;

Therefore release me and depart on your way.

1860

1881

FOR YOU O DEMOCRACY

COME, I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands,
 With the love of comrades,
 With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers
 of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and
 all over the prairies,
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each
 other's necks,
 By the love of comrades,
 By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma 10
 femme!
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

1860

1881

THESE I SINGING IN SPRING

THESE I singing in spring collect for lovers,
(For who but I should understand lovers and all their sorrow
 and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)
Collecting I traverse the garden the world, but soon I pass
 the gates,
Now along the pond-side, now wading in a little, fearing not
 the wet,
Now by the post-and-rail fences where the old stones thrown
 there, pick'd from the fields, have accumulated,
(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up through the
 stones and partly cover them, beyond these I pass,)
Far, far in the forest, or sauntering later in summer, before I
 think where I go,
Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and then in
 the silence,
Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop gathers around me, 10
Some walk by my side and some behind, and some embrace
 my arms or neck,
They the spirits of dear friends dead or alive, thicker they
 come, a great crowd, and I in the middle,

Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I wander with them,
 Plucking something for tokens, tossing toward whoever is
 near me,
 Here, lilac, with a branch of pine,
 Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pull'd off a live-
 oak in Florida as it hung trailing down,¹
 Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,
 And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the
 pond-side,
 (O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and returns
 again never to separate from me,
 And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades, 20
 this calamus-root² shall,
 Interchange it youths with each other! let none render it
 back!)
 And twigs of maple and a bunch of wild orange and chestnut,
 And stems of currants and plum-blows, and the aromatic
 cedar,
 These I compass'd around by a thick cloud of spirits,
 Wandering, point to or touch as I pass, or throw them loosely
 from me,
 Indicating to each one what he shall have, giving something
 to each;
 But what I drew from the water by the pond-side, that I
 reserve,
 I will give of it, but only to them that love as I myself am
 capable of loving.

1860

1867

NOT HEAVING FROM MY RIBB'D BREAST ONLY

Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only,
 Not in sighs at night in rage dissatisfied with myself,
 Not in those long-drawn, ill-supprest sighs,
 Not in many an oath and promise broken,
 Not in my wilful and savage soul's volition,
 Not in the subtle nourishment of the air,
 Not in this beating and pounding at my temples and wrists,
 Not in the curious systole and diastole within which will one
 day cease,

¹ Compare *I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing*, p. 108.

² Sweet-flag.

Not in many a hungry wish told to the skies only,
 Not in cries, laughter, defiances, thrown from me when alone 10
 far in the wilds,
 Not in husky pantings through clinch'd teeth,
 Not in sounded and resounded words, chattering words,
 echoes, dead words,
 Not in the murmurs of my dreams while I sleep,
 Nor the other murmurs of these incredible dreams of every
 day,
 Nor in the limbs and senses of my body that take you and
 dismiss you continually—not there,
 Not in any or all of them O adhesiveness! ¹ O pulse of my life!
 Need I that you exist and show yourself any more than in
 these songs.

1860

1867

OF THE TERRIBLE DOUBT OF APPEARANCES

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,
 Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,
 That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
 That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable
 only,
 May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men, hills,
 shining and flowing waters,
 The skies of day and night, colors, densities, forms, may-be
 these are (as doubtless they are) only apparitions, and
 the real something has yet to be known,
 (How often they dart out of themselves as if to confound me
 and mock me!
 How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows, aught
 of them,)
 May-be seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they in-
 deed but seem) as from my present point of view, and
 might prove (as of course they would) nought of what
 they appear, or nought anyhow, from entirely changed
 points of view;
 To me these and the like of these are curiously answer'd by 10
 my lovers, my dear friends,
 When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while
 holding me by the hand,

¹ A phrenological term for the propensity for friendly attachment.

When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and
reason hold not, surround us and pervade us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I am
silent, I require nothing further,
I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of identity
beyond the grave,
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

1860

1867

THE BASE OF ALL METAPHYSICS

AND now gentlemen,
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,
As base and finale too for all metaphysics.

(So to the students the old professor,
At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic systems,
Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and Hegel,
Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,
And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine
having studied long,
I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,
See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ
the divine I see,
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of
friend to friend,
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and
parents,
Of city for city and land for land.

1871

1871

RECORDERS AGES HENCE

RECORDERS ages hence,
Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive exterior,
I will tell you what to say of me,
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the tenderest lover,

The friend the lover's portrait, of whom his friend his lover
was fondest,
Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless
ocean of love within him, and freely pour'd it forth,
Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking of his dear
friends, his lovers,
Who pensive away from one he lov'd often lay sleepless and
dissatisfied at night,
Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one he lov'd
might secretly be indifferent to him,
Whose happiest days were far away through fields, in woods,
on hills, he and another wandering hand in hand, they
twain apart from other men,
Who oft as he saunter'd the streets curv'd with his arm the
shoulder of his friend, while the arm of his friend rested
upon him also.

10

1860

1867

WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY

WHEN I heard at the close of the day how my name had been
receiv'd with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a
happy night for me that follow'd,
And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accom-
plish'd, still I was not happy,
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect
health, refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of
autumn,
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disap-
pear in the morning light,
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing
bathed, laughing with the cool waters, and saw the sun
rise,
And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his
way coming, O then I was happy,
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food
nourish'd me more, and the beautiful day pass'd well,
And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at even-
ing came my friend,
And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly
continually up the shores,
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed
to me whispering to congratulate me,

10

For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same
cover in the cool night,
In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was in-
clined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast—and that night I
was happy.

1860

1867

ARE YOU THE NEW PERSON DRAWN TOWARD ME?

ARE you the new person drawn toward me?
To begin with take warning, I am surely far different from
what you suppose;
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?
Do you think it is so easy to have me become your lover?
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd satis-
faction?
Do you think I am trusty and faithful?
Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth and
tolerant manner of me?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a
real heroic man?
Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all maya,
illusion?

1860

1867

ROOTS AND LEAVES THEMSELVES ALONE

Roots and leaves themselves alone are these,
Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods and
pond-side,
Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind around
tighter than vines,
Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage of trees as
the sun is risen,
Breezes of land and love set from living shores to you on the
living sea, to you O sailors!
Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs offer'd fresh
to young persons wandering out in the fields when the
winter breaks up,
Love-buds put before you and within you whoever you are,

Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,
If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will open
and bring form, color, perfume, to you,
If you become the aliment and the wet they will become 10
flowers, fruits, tall branches and trees.

1860

1867

NOT HEAT FLAMES UP AND CONSUMES

Not heat flames up and consumes,
Not sea-waves hurry in and out,
Not the air delicious and dry, the air of ripe summer, bears
lightly along white down-balls of myriads of seeds,
Wafted, sailing gracefully, to drop where they may;
Not these, O none of these more than the flames of me, con-
suming, burning for his love whom I love,
O none more than I hurrying in and out;
Does the tide hurry, seeking something, and never give up?
O I the same,
O nor down-balls nor perfumes, nor the high rain-emitting
clouds, are borne through the open air,
Any more than my soul is borne through the open air,
Wafted in all directions O love, for friendship, for you. 10

1860

1867

TRICKLE DROPS

TRICKLE drops! my blue veins leaving!
O drops of me! trickle, slow drops,
Candid from me falling, drip, bleeding drops,
From wounds made to free you whence you were prison'd,
From my face, from my forehead and lips,
From my breast, from within where I was conceal'd, press
forth red drops, confession drops,
Stain every page, stain every song I sing, every word I say,
bloody drops,
Let them know your scarlet heat, let them glisten,
Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet,
Glow upon all I have written or shall write, bleeding drops, 10
Let it all be seen in your light, blushing drops.

1860

1867

CITY OF ORGIES

CITY of orgies, walks and joys,
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will one
day make you illustrious,
Not the pageants of you, not your shifting tableaux, your
spectacles, repay me,
Not the interminable rows of your houses, nor the ships at
the wharves,
Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows
with goods in them,
Nor to converse with learn'd persons, or bear my share in the
soiree or feast;
Not those, but as I pass O Manhattan, your frequent and
swift flash of eyes offering me love,
Offering response to my own—these repay me,
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.

1860

1867

BEHOLD THIS SWARTHY FACE

BEHOLD this swarthy face, these gray eyes,
This beard, the white wool unclipt upon my neck,
My brown hands and the silent manner of me without charm;
Yet comes one a Manhattanese and ever at parting kisses me
lightly on the lips with robust love,
And I on the crossing of the street or on the ship's deck give a
kiss in return,
We observe that salute of American comrades land and sea,
We are those two natural and nonchalant persons.

1860

1867

I SAW IN LOUISIANA A LIVE-OAK GROWING

I SAW in Louisiana a live-oak growing,
All alone stood it and the moss hung down from the branches,
Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous leaves
of dark green,
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of my-
self,
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves standing
alone there without its friend near, for I knew I could
not,

And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon
 it, and twined around it a little moss,
 And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight, in my room,
 It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,
 (For I believe lately I think of little else than of them,)
 Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think of
 manly love;
 For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisi-
 ana solitary in a wide flat space,
 Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a lover near,
 I know very well I could not.

1860

1867

TO A STRANGER

PASSING stranger! you do not know how longingly I look
 upon you,
 You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes
 to me as of a dream,)
 I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,
 All is recall'd as we flit by each other, fluid, affectionate,
 chaste, matured,
 You grew up with me, were a boy with me or a girl with me,
 I ate with you and slept with you, your body has become not
 yours only nor left my body mine only,
 You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we pass,
 you take of my beard, breast, hands, in return,
 I am not to speak to you, I am to think of you when I sit
 alone or wake at night alone,
 I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again,
 I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

1860

1867

THIS MOMENT YEARNING AND THOUGHTFUL

THIS moment yearning and thoughtful sitting alone,
 It seems to me there are other men in other lands yearning
 and thoughtful,
 It seems to me I can look over and behold them in Germany,
 Italy, France, Spain,
 Or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or Japan, talking
 other dialects,

And it seems to me if I could know those men I should become
attached to them as I do to men in my own lands,
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them.

1860

1867

I HEAR IT WAS CHARGED AGAINST ME

I HEAR it was charged against me that I sought to destroy
institutions,
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,
(What indeed have I in common with them? or what with the
destruction of them?)
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city of
these States inland and seaboard,
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel little or
large that dents the water,
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

1860

1867

THE PRAIRIE-GRASS DIVIDING

THE prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing,
I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,
Demand the most copious and close companionship of men,
Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,
Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious,
Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with freedom
and command, leading not following,
Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those with sweet and
lusty flesh clear of taint,
Those that look carelessly in the faces of Presidents and
governors, as to say *Who are you?*
Those of earth-born passion, simple, never constrain'd, never
obedient,
Those of inland America.

1860

1867

WHEN I PERUSE THE CONQUER'D FAME

WHEN I peruse the conquer'd fame of heroes and the victories
of mighty generals, I do not envy the generals,
Nor the President in his Presidency, nor the rich in his great
house,

But when I hear of the brotherhood of lovers, how it was
with them,
How together through life, through dangers, odium, un-
changing, long and long,
Through youth and through middle and old age, how un-
faltering, how affectionate and faithful they were,
Then I am pensive—I hastily walk away fill'd with the bitter-
est envy.

1860

1871

WE TWO BOYS TOGETHER CLINGING

We two boys together clinging,
One the other never leaving,
Up and down the roads going, North and South excursions
making,
Power enjoying, elbows stretching, fingers clutching,
Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving,
No law less than ourselves owning, sailing, soldiering, thiev-
ing, threatening,
Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing, water drink-
ing, on the turf or the sea-beach dancing,
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking, feebleness
chasing,
Fulfilling our foray.

1860

1867

A PROMISE TO CALIFORNIA

A PROMISE to California,
Or inland to the great pastoral Plains, and on to Puget sound
and Oregon;
Sojourning east a while longer, soon I travel toward you, to
remain, to teach robust American love,
For I know very well that I and robust love belong among
you, inland, and along the Western sea;¹
For these States tend inland and toward the Western sea, and
I will also.

1860

1867

¹ Pacific Ocean.

HERE THE FRAILEST LEAVES OF ME

HERE the frailest leaves of me and yet my strongest lasting,
Here I shade and hide my thoughts, I myself do not expose
them,

And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

1860

1871

NO LABOR-SAVING MACHINE

No labor-saving machine,
Nor discovery have I made,
Nor will I be able to leave behind me any wealthy bequest to
found a hospital or library,
Nor reminiscence of any deed of courage for America,
Nor literary success nor intellect, nor book for the book-shelf,
But a few carols vibrating through the air I leave,
For comrades and lovers.

1860

1881

A GLIMPSE

A GLIMPSE through an interstice caught,
Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room¹ around
the stove late of a winter night, and I unremark'd seated
in a corner,
Of a youth who loves me and whom I love, silently approach-
ing and seating himself near, that he may hold me by the
hand,
A long while amid the noises of coming and going, of drink-
ing and oath and smutty jest,
There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking
little, perhaps not a word.

1860

1867

A LEAF FOR HAND IN HAND

A LEAF for hand in hand;
You natural persons old and young!
You on the Mississippi and on all the branches and bayous
of the Mississippi!
You friendly boatmen and mechanics! you roughs!
You twain! and all processions moving along the streets!
I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it common for
you to walk hand in hand.

1860

1867

¹ Public-house.

EARTH, MY LIKENESS

EARTH, my likeness,
Though you look so impassive, ample and spheric there,
I now suspect that is not all;
I now suspect there is something fierce in you eligible to burst
forth,
For an athlete is enamour'd of me, and I of him,
But toward him there is something fierce and terrible in me
eligible to burst forth,
I dare not tell it in words, not even in these songs.

1860

1867

I DREAM'D IN A DREAM

I DREAM'D in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of
the whole of the rest of the earth,
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it
led the rest,
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,
And in all their looks and words.

1860

1867

WHAT THINK YOU I TAKE MY PEN IN HAND?

WHAT think you I take my pen in hand to record?
The battle-ship, perfect-model'd, majestic, that I saw pass the
offing to-day under full sail?
The splendors of the past day? or the splendor of the night
that envelops me?
Or the vaunted glory and growth of the great city spread
around me?—no;
But merely of two simple men I saw to-day on the pier in the
midst of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends,
The one to remain hung on the other's neck and passionately
kiss'd him,
While the one to depart tightly prest the one to remain in his
arms.

1860

1867

TO THE EAST AND TO THE WEST

To the East and to the West,
To the man of the Seaside State¹ and of Pennsylvania,
To the Kanadian of the north, to the Southerner I love,

¹ Perhaps Massachusetts, the Bay State.

These with perfect trust to depict you as myself, the germs
are in all men,
I believe the main purport of these States is to found a superb
friendship, exaltè, previously unknown,
Because I perceive it waits, and has been always waiting,
latent in all men.

1860

1867

SOMETIMES WITH ONE I LOVE

SOMETIMES with one I love I fill myself with rage for fear I
effuse unreturn'd love,
But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is certain
one way or another,
(I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not re-
turn'd,
Yet out of that I have written these songs.)

1860

1867

TO A WESTERN BOY

MANY things to absorb I teach to help you become eleve of
mine;
Yet if blood like mine circle not in your veins,
If you be not silently selected by lovers and do not silently
select lovers,
Of what use is it that you seek to become eleve of mine?

1860

1881

FAST-ANCHOR'D ETERNAL O LOVE!

FAST-ANCHOR'D eternal O love! O woman I love!
O bride! O wife! more resistless than I can tell, the thought
of you!
Then separate, as disembodied or another born,
Ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation,
I ascend, I float in the regions of your love O man,
O sharer of my roving life.

1860

1867

AMONG THE MULTITUDE

AMONG the men and women the multitude,
I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,
Acknowledging none else, not parent, wife, husband, brother,
child, any nearer than I am,

Some are baffled, but that one is not—that one knows me.

Ah lover and perfect equal,
I meant that you should discover me so by faint indirections,
And I when I meet you mean to discover you by the like in
you.

1860

1881

O YOU WHOM I OFTEN AND SILENTLY COME

O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I
may be with you,
As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the same
room with you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is
playing within me.

1860

1867

THAT SHADOW MY LIKENESS

THAT shadow my likeness that goes to and fro seeking a liveli-
hood, chattering, chaffering,
How often I find myself standing and looking at it where it
flits,
How often I question and doubt whether that is really me;
But among my lovers and caroling these songs,
O I never doubt whether that is really me.

(1859?)

1881

FULL OF LIFE NOW

FULL of life now, compact, visible,
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,¹
To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.

When you read these I that was visible am become invisible,
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking
me,
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and
become your comrade;
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now
with you.)

1859?

1871

¹ 1859.

Salut Au Monde !

I

O TAKE my hand Walt Whitman!
Such gliding wonders! such sights and sounds!
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next,
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.

What widens within you Walt Whitman?
What waves and soils exuding?
What climes? what persons and cities are here?
Who are the infants, some playing, some slumbering?
Who are the girls? who are the married women?
Who are the groups of old men going slowly with their arms
about each other's necks?
What rivers are these? what forests and fruits are these?
What are the mountains call'd that rise so high in the mists?
What myriads of dwellings are they fill'd with dwellers?

2

Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens,
Asia, Africa, Europe, are to the east—America is provided
for in the west,
Banding the bulge of the earth winds the hot equator,
Curiously north and south turn the axis-ends,
Within me is the longest day, the sun wheels in slanting rings,
it does not set for months,
Stretch'd in due time within me the midnight sun just rises
above the horizon and sinks again,
Within me zones, seas, cataracts, forests, volcanoes, groups, 20
Malaysia, Polynesia, and the great West Indian islands.

3

What do you hear Walt Whitman?

I hear the workman singing and the farmer's wife singing,
I hear in the distance the sounds of children and of animals
early in the day,
I hear emulous shouts of Australians pursuing the wild horse,

I hear the Spanish dance with castanets in the chestnut shade,
 to the rebeck and guitar,
 I hear continual echoes from the Thames,
 I hear fierce French liberty songs,
 I hear of the Italian boat-sculler the musical recitative of old
 poems,
 I hear the locusts in Syria as they strike the grain and grass 30
 with the showers of their terrible clouds,
 I hear the Coptic refrain toward sundown, pensively falling
 on the breast of the black venerable vast mother the Nile,
 I hear the chirp of the Mexican muleteer, and the bells of the
 mule,
 I hear the Arab muezzin calling from the top of the mosque,
 I hear the Christian priests at the altars of their churches, I
 hear the responsive base and soprano,
 I hear the cry of the Cossack, and the sailor's voice putting to
 sea at Okotsk,¹
 I hear the wheeze of the slave-coffle as the slaves march on, as
 the husky gangs pass on by twos and threes, fasten'd
 together with wrist-chains and ankle-chains,
 I hear the Hebrew reading his records and psalms,
 I hear the rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the strong
 legends of the Romans,
 I hear the tale of the divine life and bloody death of the
 beautiful God the Christ,
 I hear the Hindoo teaching his favorite pupil the loves, wars, 40
 adages, transmitted safely to this day from poets who
 wrote three thousand years ago.

4

What do you see Walt Whitman?
 Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute
 you?

I see a great round wonder rolling through space,
 I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, graveyards, jails, fac-
 tories, palaces, hovels, huts of barbarians, tents of
 nomads upon the surface,
 I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers are sleep-
 ing, and the sunlit part on the other side,
 I see the curious rapid change of the light and shade,
 I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of them
 as my land is to me.

¹ Okhotsk, in Asiatic Russia.

I see plenteous waters,
 I see mountain peaks, I see the sierras of Andes where they
 range,
 I see plainly the Himalayas, Chian Shahs, Altays, Ghauts,¹ 50
 I see the giant pinnacles of Elbruz,² Kazbek, Bazardjusi,³
 I see the Styrian Alps, and the Karnac Alps,
 I see the Pyrenees, Balks,⁴ Carpathians, and to the north the
 Dofrafields,⁵ and off at sea mount Hecla,
 I see Vesuvius and Etna, the mountains of the Moon, and the
 Red mountains of Madagascar,
 I see the Lybian, Arabian, and Asiatic deserts,
 I see huge dreadful Arctic and Antarctic icebergs,
 I see the superior oceans and the interior ones, the Atlantic
 and Pacific, the sea of Mexico, the Brazilian sea, and the
 sea of Peru,
 The waters of Hindustan, the China sea, and the gulf of
 Guinea,
 The Japan waters, the beautiful bay of Nagasaki land-lock'd
 in its mountains,
 The spread of the Baltic, Caspian, Bothnia, the British shores, 60
 and the bay of Biscay,
 The clear-sunn'd Mediterranean, and from one to another of
 its islands,
 The White sea, and the sea around Greenland.

 I behold the mariners of the world,
 Some are in storms, some in the night with the watch on the
 lookout,
 Some drifting helplessly, some with contagious diseases.

 I behold the sail and steamships of the world, some in clus-
 ters in port, some on their voyages,
 Some double the cape of Storms, some cape Verde, others
 capes Guardafui, Bon, or Bajadore,
 Others Dondra head, others pass the straits of Sunda, others
 cape Lopatka, others Behring's straits,
 Others cape Horn, others sail the gulf of Mexico or along
 Cuba or Hayti, others Hudson's bay or Baffin's bay,
 Others pass the straits of Dover, others enter the Wash, 70
 others the Firth of Solway, others round Cape Clear,
 others the Land's End,
 Others traverse the Zuyder Zee or the Scheld,⁶
 Others as comers and goers at Gibraltar or the Dardanelles,

¹ Ghats.

² Elburz.

³ Bazardyuze.

⁴ Balkan Mountains.

⁵ Dovrefjeld.

⁶ Scheldt.

Others sternly push their way through the northern winter-
 packs,
 Others descend or ascend the Obi or the Lena,
 Others the Niger or the Congo, others the Indus, the Buram-
 pooter¹ and Cambodia,
 Others wait steam'd up ready to start in the ports of Aus-
 tralia,
 Wait at Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Marseilles, Lisbon,
 Naples, Hamburg, Bremen, Bordeaux, the Hague,
 Copenhagen,
 Wait at Valparaiso, Rio Janeiro, Panama.

5

I see the tracks of the railroads of the earth,
 I see them in Great Britain, I see them in Europe,
 I see them in Asia and in Africa.

80

I see the electric telegraphs of the earth,
 I see the filaments of the news of the wars, deaths, losses,
 gains, passions, of my race.

I see the long river-stripes of the earth,
 I see the Amazon and the Paraguay,
 I see the four great rivers of China, the Amour, the Yellow
 River, the Yiang-tse, and the Pearl,
 I see where the Seine flows, and where the Danube, the Loire,
 the Rhone, and the Guadalquiver flow,
 I see the windings of the Volga, the Dnieper, the Oder,
 I see the Tuscan going down the Arno, and the Venetian
 along the Po,
 I see the Greek seaman sailing out of Egina bay.

90

6

I see the sight of the old empire of Assyria, and that of Per-
 sia, and that of India,
 I see the falling of the Ganges over the high rim of Saukara.²
 I see the place of the idea of the Deity incarnated by avatars
 in human forms,
 I see the spots of the successions of priests on the earth,
 oracles, sacrificers, brahmins, sabians, llamas, monks,
 muftis, exhorters,

¹ Brahmaputra.

² Saukira Bay, Oman, eastern part of Arabian peninsula.

I see where druids walk'd the groves of Mona, I see the
mistletoe and vervain,
I see the temples of the deaths of the bodies of Gods, I see the
old signifiers.

I see Christ eating the bread of his last supper in the midst of
youths and old persons,
I see where the strong divine young man the Hercules toil'd
faithfully and long and then died,
I see the place of the innocent rich life and hapless fate of the
beautiful nocturnal son, the full-limb'd Bacchus,
I see Kneph, blooming, drest in blue, with the crown of 100
feathers on his head,
I see Hermes, unsuspected, dying, well-belov'd, saying to the
people *Do not weep for me,*
This is not my true country, I have lived banish'd from my true
country, I now go back there,
I return to the celestial sphere where every one goes in his turn.

7

I see the battle-fields of the earth, grass grows upon them and
blossoms and corn,
I see the tracks of ancient and modern expeditions.
I see the nameless masonries, venerable messages of the un-
known events, heroes, records of the earth.

I see the places of the sagas,
I see pine-trees and fir-trees torn by northern blasts,
I see granite boulders and cliffs, I see green meadows and
lakes,
I see the burial-cairns of Scandinavian warriors, 110
I see them raised high with stones by the marge of restless
oceans, that the dead men's spirits when they wearied of
their quiet graves might rise up through the mounds and
gaze on the tossing billows, and be refresh'd by storms,
immensity, liberty, action.

I see the steppes of Asia,
I see the tumuli of Mongolia, I see the tents of Kalmucks
and Baskirs,
I see the nomadic tribes with herds of oxen and cows,
I see the table-lands notch'd with ravines, I see the jungles
and deserts,
I see the camel, the wild steed, the bustard, the fat-tail'd
sheep, the antelope, and the burrowing wolf.

I see the highlands of Abyssinia,
I see flocks of goats feeding, and see the fig-tree, tamarind,
date,
And see fields of teff-wheat and places of verdure and gold.

I see the Brazilian vaquero,¹
I see the Bolivian ascending mount Sorata,
I see the Wacho crossing the plains, I see the incomparable
rider of horses with his lasso on his arm,
I see over the pampas the pursuit of wild cattle for their hides.

120

8, [9]

I see the regions of snow and ice,
I see the sharp-eyed Samoiede² and the Finn,
I see the seal-seeker in his boat poising his lance,
I see the Siberian on his slight-built sledge drawn by dogs,
I see the porpoise-hunters, I see the whale-crews of the south
Pacific and the north Atlantic,
I see the cliffs, glaciers, torrents, valleys, of Switzerland—I
mark the long winters and the isolation.

I see the cities of the earth and make myself at random a part 130
of them,
I am a real Parisian,
I am a habitan of Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Constantinople,
I am of Adelaide, Sidney, Melbourne,
I am of London, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh, Limerick,
I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyons, Brussels,
Berne, Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Florence,
I belong in Moscow, Cracow, Warsaw, or northward in
Christiania or Stockholm, or in Siberian Irkutsk, or in
some street in Iceland,
I descend upon all those cities, and rise from them again.

10

I see vapors exhaling from unexplored countries,
I see the savage types, the bow and arrow, the poison'd
splint, the fetich, and the obi.

I see African and Asiatic towns,
I see Algiers, Tripoli, Derne, Mogadore, Timbuctoo, Mon-
rovia,

140

¹ Cowherd.

² Samoyede.

I see the swarms of Pekin, Canton, Benares, Delhi, Calcutta,
Tokio,
I see the Kruman in his hut, and the Dahoman and Ashantee-
man in their huts,
I see the Turk smoking opium in Aleppo,
I see the picturesque crowds at the fairs of Khiva and those of
Herat,
I see Teheran, I see Muscat and Medina and the intervening
sands, I see the caravans toiling onward,
I see Egypt and the Egyptians, I see the pyramids and
obelisks,
I look on chisell'd histories, records of conquering kings,
dynasties, cut in slabs of sand-stone, or on granite-
blocks,
I see at Memphis mummy-pits containing mummies em-
balm'd, swathed in linen-cloth, lying there many cen-
turies,
I look on the fall'n Theban, the large-ball'd eyes, the side- 150
drooping neck, the hands folded across the breast.

I see all the menials of the earth, laboring,
I see all the prisoners in the prisons,
I see the defective human bodies of the earth,
The blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks, lunatics,
The pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-makers of
the earth,
The helpless infants, and the helpless old men and women.

I see male and female everywhere,
I see the serene brotherhood of philosophers,
I see the constructiveness of my race,
I see the results of the perseverance and industry of my race, 160
I see ranks, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, I go among
them, I mix indiscriminately,
And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.

II

You whoever you are!
You daughter or son of England!
You of the mighty Slavic tribes and empires! you Russ in
Russia!
You dim-descended, black, divine-soul'd African, large, fine-
headed, nobly-form'd, superbly destin'd, on equal terms
with me!
You Norwegian! Swede! Dane! Icelfander! you Prussian!

You Spaniard of Spain! you Portuguese!
 You Frenchwoman and Frenchman of France!
 You Belge! you liberty-lover of the Netherlands! (you stock 170
 whence I myself have descended;)
 You sturdy Austrian! you Lombard! Hun! Bohemian! far-
 mer of Styria!
 You neighbor of the Danube!
 You working-man of the Rhine, the Elbe, or the Weser! you
 working-woman too!
 You Sardinian! you Bavarian! Swabian! Saxon! Wallachian!
 Bulgarian!
 You Roman! Neapolitan! you Greek!
 You lithe matador in the arena at Seville!
 You mountaineer living lawlessly on the Taurus or Caucasus!
 You Bokh horse-herd watching your mares and stallions
 feeding!
 You beautiful-bodied Persian at full speed in the saddle
 shooting arrows to the mark!
 You Chinaman and Chinawoman of China! you Tartar of 180
 Tartary!
 You women of the earth subordinated at your tasks!
 You Jew journeying in your old age through every risk to
 stand once on Syrian ground!
 You other Jews waiting in all lands for your Messiah!
 You thoughtful Armenian pondering by some stream of the
 Euphrates! you peering amid the ruins of Nineveh! you
 ascending mount Ararat!
 You foot-worn pilgrim welcoming the far-away sparkle of
 the minarets of Mecca!
 You sheiks along the stretch from Suez to Bab-el-mandeb
 ruling your families and tribes!
 You olive-grower tending your fruit on fields of Nazareth,
 Damascus, or lake Tiberias!
 You Thibet trader on the wide inland or bargaining in the
 shops of Lassa!
 You Japanese man or woman! you liver in Madagascar,
 Ceylon, Sumatra, Borneo!
 All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, in- 190
 different of place!
 All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes of the
 sea!
 And you of centuries hence when you listen to me!
 And you each and everywhere whom I specify not, but in-
 clude just the same!
 Health to you! good will to you all, from me and America
 sent!

Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right upon
the earth,
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

12

You Hottentot with clicking palate! you woolly-hair'd
hordes!
You own'd persons dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops! 200
You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive coun-
tenances of brutes!
You poor koboo whom the meanest of the rest look down
upon for all your glimmering language and spirituality!
You dwarf'd Kamtschatkan, Greenlander, Lapp!
You Austral¹ negro, naked, red, sooty, with protrusive lip,
groveling, seeking your food!
You Caffre, Berber, Soudanese!
You haggard, uncouth, untutor'd Bedowee!
You plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul,² Cairo!
You benighted roamer of Amazonia! you Patagonian! you
Feejee-man!
I do not prefer others so very much before you either,
I do not say one word against you, away back there where 210
you stand,
(You will come forward in due time to my side.)

13

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination around
the whole earth,
I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them ready for
me in all lands,
I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them.

You vapors, I think I have risen with you, moved away
to distant continents, and fallen down there, for reasons,
I think I have blown with you you winds;
You waters I have finger'd every shore with you,
I have run through what any river or strait of the globe has
run through,
I have taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas and on the
high embedded rocks, to cry thence:

¹ Australasian.

² Kabul, in Afghanistan.

Salut au monde!

220

What cities the light or warmth penetrates I penetrate those
cities myself,
All islands to which birds wing their way I wing my way
myself.

Toward you all, in America's name,
I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the signal,
To remain after me in sight forever,
For all the haunts and homes of men.

1856

1881

Song of the Open Road

I

AFOOT and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-for-
tune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need
nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,
I do not want the constellations any nearer,
I know they are very well where they are,
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

10

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wher-
ever I go,
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,
I am fill'd with them; and I will fill them in return.)

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are
not all that is here,
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference nor
denial,

The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the
illiterate person, are not denied;

The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's tramp, 20
the drunkard's stagger, the laughing party of mechanics,

The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the
eloping couple,

The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture
into the town, the return back from the town,

They pass, I also pass, any thing passes, none can be inter-
dicted,

None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!

You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give
them shape!

You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable
showers!

You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!

I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so
dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the edges! 30

You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-
lined sides! you distant ships!

You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd façades! you roofs!

You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!

You windows whose transparent shells might expose so
much!

You doors and ascending steps! you arches!

You gray stones of interminable pavements! you trodden
crossings!

From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted to
yourselves, and now would impart the same secretly to
me,

From the living and the dead you have peopled your im-
passive surfaces, and the spirits thereof would be evident
and amicable with me.

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,
 The picture alive, every part in its best light,
 The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping where
 it is not wanted,
 The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay fresh sentiment
 of the road.

40

O highway I travel, do you say to me *Do not leave me?*
 Do you say *Venture not—if you leave me you are lost?*
 Do you say *I am already prepared, I am well-beaten and un-*
denied, adhere to me?

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to leave you, yet I
 love you,
 You express me better than I can express myself,
 You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air, and all
 free poems also,
 I think I could stop here myself and do miracles,
 I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and
 whoever beholds me shall like me,
 I think whoever I see must be happy.

50

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imagin-
 ary lines,
 Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
 Listening to others, considering well what they say,
 Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
 Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the
 holds that would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space,
 The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south
 are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,
 I did not know I held so much goodness.

60

All seems beautiful to me,
 I can repeat over to men and women You have done such
 good to me I would do the same to you,

I will recruit for myself and you as I go,
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,
I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,
Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall bless
me.

6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear it would not
amaze me,

Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd it 70
would not astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the
earth.

Here a great personal deed has room,
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race of men,
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and mocks
all authority and all argument against it.)

Here is the test of wisdom,
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not
having it,

Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own
proof,

Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is content, 80
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and
the excellence of things;

Something there is in the float of the sight of things that pro-
vokes it out of the soul.

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove at all
under the spacious clouds and along the landscape and
flowing currents.

Here is realization,
Here is a man tallied—he realizes here what he has in him,
The past, the future, majesty, love—if they are vacant of you,
you are vacant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me?
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for you and me? 90

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it is
apropos;
Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by strangers?
Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?

7

Here is the efflux of the soul,
The efflux of the soul comes from within through embower'd
gates, ever provoking questions,
These yearnings why are they? these thoughts in the darkness
why are they?
Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me
the sunlight expands my blood?
Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink flat and
lank?
Why are there trees I never walk under but large and melo-
dious thoughts descend upon me?
(I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees 100
and always drop fruit as I pass;)
What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?
What with some driver as I ride on the seat by his side?
What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the shore as
I walk by and pause?
What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's good-will?
what gives them to be free to mine?

8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,
I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,
Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and sweet-
ness of man and woman,
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter 110
every day out of the roots of themselves, than it sprouts
fresh and sweet continually out of itself.)

Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat of
the love of young and old,
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and
attainments,
Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of contact.

9

Allons! ¹ whoever you are come travel with me!
Traveling with me you find what never tires.

The earth never tires,
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, Nature is
rude and incomprehensible at first,
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well
envelop'd,
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than
words can tell.

Allons! we must not stop here,
However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient this
dwelling we cannot remain here,
However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters
we must not anchor here,
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are
permitted to receive it but a little while.

120

10

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,
We will sail pathless and wild seas,
We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee
clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,
Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity;
Allons! from all formules! ²
From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests.

130

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the burial waits no
longer.

Allons! yet take warning!
He traveling with me needs the best blood, thews, endurance,
None may come to the trial till he or she bring courage and
health,

¹ Let us go!

² Formulas.

Come not here if you have already spent the best of yourself,
Only those may come who come in sweet and determin'd
bodies,
No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or venereal taint is per-
mitted here.

(I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes,
We convince by our presence.)

II

Listen! I will be honest with you,
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new
prizes,
These are the days that must happen to you:
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or
achieve,
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, you
hardly settle yourself to satisfaction before you are
call'd by an irresistible call to depart,
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings of
those who remain behind you,
What beckonings of love you receive you shall only answer
with passionate kisses of parting,
You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their
reach'd hands toward you.

140

12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!
They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic
men—they are the greatest women,
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,
Habitués of many distant countries, habitués of far-distant
dwellings,
Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary
toilers,
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the
shore,
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender helpers
of children, bearers of children,
Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-down
of coffins,

150

Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years, the
 curious years each emerging from that which preceded it,
 Journeyers as with companions, namely their own diverse
 phases,
 Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days, 160
 Journeyers gayly with their own youth, journeyers with their
 bearded and well-grain'd manhood,
 Journeyers with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd, con-
 tent,
 Journeyers with their own sublime old age of manhood or
 womanhood,
 Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of
 the universe,
 Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of
 death.

13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,
 To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,
 To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and
 nights they tend to,
 Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,
 To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass 170
 it,
 To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may
 reach it and pass it,
 To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for
 you, however long but it stretches and waits for you,
 To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,
 To see no possession but you may possess it, enjoying all
 without labor or purchase, abstracting the feast yet not
 abstracting one particle of it,
 To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich man's
 elegant villa, and the chaste blessings of the well-married
 couple, and the fruits of orchards and flowers of gardens,
 To take to your use out of the compact cities as you pass
 through,
 To carry buildings and streets with you afterward wherever
 you go,
 To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you en-
 counter them, to gather the love out of their hearts,
 To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that you
 leave them behind you,
 To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as roads 180
 for traveling souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls,
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that was
or is apparent upon this globe or any globe, falls into
niches and corners before the procession of souls along
the grand roads of the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along the
grand roads of the universe, all other progress is the
needed emblem and sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbulent,
feeble, dissatisfied,
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected by
men,
They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where
they go,
But I know that they go toward the best—toward something
great.

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or woman come forth!
You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house,
though you built it, or though it has been built for you.

190

Out of the dark confinement! out from behind the screen!
It is useless to protest, I know all and expose it.

Behold through you as bad as the rest,
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of people,
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd and
trimm'd faces,
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to hear the confes-
sion,
Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulking and hiding it
goes,
Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities, polite
and bland in the parlors,
In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in the public assembly,
Home to the houses of men and women, at the table, in the
bedroom, everywhere,
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death
under the breast-bones, hell under the skull-bones,
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and
artificial flowers,

200

Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable of
itself,
Speaking of any thing else but never of itself.

14

Allons! through struggles and wars!
The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?
What has succeeded? yourself? your nation? Nature?
Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of 210
things that from any fruition of success, no matter what,
shall come forth something to make a greater struggle
necessary.

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,
He going with me must go well arm'd,
He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry
enemies, desertions.

15

Allons! the road is before us!
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—be
not detain'd!
Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on
the shelf unopen'd!
Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain
unearn'd!
Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead in
the court, and the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand! 220
I give you my love more precise than money,
I give you myself before preaching or law;
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

Crossing Brooklyn Ferry

I

FLOOD-TIDE below me! I see you face to face!
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you
also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes,
how curious you are to me!

On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross,
returning home, are more curious to me than you sup-
pose,

And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are
more to me, and more in my meditations, than you
might suppose.

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours
of the day,

The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disinte-
grated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,

The similitudes of the past and those of the future,

The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and
hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage over
the river,

The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far 10
away,

The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and
them,

The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore
to shore,

Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,

Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west,
and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,

Others will see the islands large and small;

Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun
half an hour high,

A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence,
others will see them,

Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the
falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not, 20
 I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever
 so many generations hence,
 Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,
 Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a
 crowd,
 Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the
 bright flow, I was refresh'd,
 Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift
 current, I stood yet was hurried,
 Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the
 thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,
 Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the
 air floating with motionless wings, oscillating their
 bodies,
 Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and
 left the rest in strong shadow,
 Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward 30
 the south,
 Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
 Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
 Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape
 of my head in the sunlit water,
 Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-west-
 ward,
 Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,
 Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,
 Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,
 Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at
 anchor,
 The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,
 The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slen- 40
 der serpentine pennants,
 The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their
 pilot-houses,
 The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl
 of the wheels,
 The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,
 The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the
 frolicsome crests and glistening,
 The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls
 of the granite storehouses by the docks,

On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely
flank'd on each side by the barges, the hay-boat,¹ the
belated lighter,
On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chim-
neys burning high and glaringly into the night,
Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and
yellow light over the tops of houses, and down into the
clefts of streets.

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river, 50
The men and women I saw were all near to me,
Others the same—others who look back on me because I
look'd forward to them,
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day, and to-night.)

5

What is it then between us?
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between
us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place
avails not,
I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in
the waters around it,
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me.
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came 60
upon me,
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they
came upon me,
I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I
knew I should be of my body.

6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
The dark threw its patches down upon me also,
The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,
My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in
reality meagre?

¹ A flat boat for transporting hay.

Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,
 I am he who knew what it was to be evil, 70
 I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
 Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,
 Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,
 Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malig-
 nant,
 The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,
 The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish,
 not wanting,
 Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of
 these wanting,
 Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,
 Was call'd by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young
 men as they saw me approaching or passing,
 Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent lean- 80
 ing of their flesh against me as I sat,
 Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assem-
 bly, yet never told them a word,
 Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing,
 gnawing, sleeping,
 Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,
 The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great
 as we like,
 Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

7

Closer yet I approach you,
 What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I
 laid in my stores in advance,
 I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?
 Who knows but I am enjoying this? 90
 Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking
 at you now, for all you cannot see me?

8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than
 mast-hemm'd Manhattan?
 River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?
 The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the
 twilight, and the belated lighter?

What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and
with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my
nighest name as I approach?

What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or
man that looks in my face?

Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?

We understand then do we not?

What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not ac-
cepted?

What the study could not teach—what the preaching could 100
not accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not?

9

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the
ebb-tide!

Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!

Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor
me, or the men and women generations after me!

Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!
Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful hills
of Brooklyn!

Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and
answers!

Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!

Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or
public assembly!

Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call
me by my nighest name!

Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or 110
actress!

Play the old role, the role that is great or small according as
one makes it!

Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown
ways be looking upon you;

Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly,
yet haste with the hasting current;

Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high
in the air;

Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till
all downcast eyes have time to take it from you!

Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or
any one's head, in the sunlit water!

Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-
sail'd schooners, sloops, lighters!

Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!
Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows
at nightfall! cast red and yellow light over the tops of
the houses!

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are, 120
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,
About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our
divinest aromas,
Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample
and sufficient rivers,
Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,
Keep your places, objects than which none else is more
lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful
ministers,
We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate hence-
forward,
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold your-
selves from us,
We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you per-
manently within us,
We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you 130
also,
You furnish your parts toward eternity,
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

1856

1881

Song of the Answerer

I

Now list to my morning's romanza,¹ I tell the signs of the
Answerer,
To the cities and farms I sing as they spread in the sunshine
before me.

A young man comes to me bearing a message from his
brother,
How shall the young man know the whether and when of his
brother?
Tell him to send me the signs.²

¹ Romance (music).

² This and the preceding line constitute the 'message.'

And I stand before the young man face to face, and take his
right hand in my left hand and his left hand in my right
hand,

And I answer for his brother and for men, and I answer for
him that answers for all, and send these signs.

Him all wait for, him all yield up to, his word is decisive and
final,

Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves as
amid light,

Him they immerse and he immerses them.

10

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the landscape,
people, animals,

The profound earth and its attributes and the unquiet ocean,
(so tell I my morning's romanza,)

All enjoyments and properties and money, and whatever
money will buy,

The best farms, others toiling and planting and he unavoid-
ably reaps,

The nobliest and costliest cities, others grading and building
and he domiciles there,

Nothing for any one but what is for him, near and far are for
him, the ships in the offing,

The perpetual shows and marches on land are for him if they
are for anybody.

He puts things in their attitudes,

He puts to-day out of himself with plasticity and love,

He places his own times, reminiscences, parents, brothers
and sisters, associations, employment, politics, so that
the rest never shame them afterward, nor assume to
command them.

20

He is the Answerer,

What can be answer'd he answers, and what cannot be
answer'd he shows how it cannot be answer'd.

A man is a summons and challenge,

(It is vain to skulk—do you hear that mocking and laughter?
do you hear the ironical echoes?)

Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action, pleasure,
pride, beat up and down seeking to give satisfaction,

He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat up
and down also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he may go
freshly and gently and safely by day or by night,
He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of the
prying of hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more wel-
come or universal than he is,
The person he favors by day or sleeps with at night is blessed. 30

Every existence has its idiom, every thing has an idiom and
tongue,

He resolves all tongues into his own and bestows it upon
men, and any man translates, and any man translates
himself also,

One part does not counteract another part, he is the joiner,
he sees how they join.

He says indifferently and alike *How are you friend?* to the
President at his levee,

And he says *Good-day my brother*, to Cudge¹ that hoes in the
sugar-field,

And both understand him and know that his speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the capitol,
He walks among the Congress, and one Representative says
to another, *Here is our equal appearing and new.*

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,
And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier, and the sailors 40
that he has follow'd the sea,

And the authors take him for an author, and the artists for
an artist,

And the laborers perceive he could labor with them and love
them,

No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow it or
has follow'd it,

No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers
and sisters there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,
A Jew to the Jew he seems, a Russ to the Russ, usual and
near, removed from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveler's coffee-house claims him,
The Italian or Frenchman is sure, the German is sure, the
Spaniard is sure, and the island Cuban is sure,

¹ A common name for negro slaves.

The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on the Mississippi or St. Lawrence or Sacramento, or Hudson or Paumanok sound,¹ claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect blood, 50

The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar, see themselves in the ways of him, he strangely transmutes them,

They are not vile any more, they hardly know themselves they are so grown.

2

The indications and tally of time,
Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophers,
Time, always without break, indicates itself in parts,
What always indicates the poet is the crowd of the pleasant company of singers, and their words,

The words of the singers are the hours or minutes of the light or dark, but the words of the maker of poems are the general light and dark,

The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immortality,
His insight and power encircle things and the human race,
He is the glory and extract thus far of things and of the human race. 60

The singers do not beget, only the Poet begets,
The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear often enough,
but rare has the day been, likewise the spot, of the birth of the maker of poems, the Answerer,
(Not every century nor every five centuries has contain'd such a day, for all its names.)

The singers of successive hours of centuries may have ostensible names, but the name of each of them is one of the singers,

The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer, sweet-singer, night-singer, parlor-singer, love-singer, weird-singer, or something else.

All this time and at all times wait the words of true poems,
The words of true poems do not merely please,
The true poets are not followers of beauty but the august masters of beauty;

¹ Long Island Sound.

The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of
mothers and fathers,
The words of true poems are the tuft and final applause of 70
science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason, health,
rudeness of body, withdrawnness,
Gayety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are some of the words of
poems.

The sailor and traveler underlie the maker of poems, the
Answerer,
The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist,
artist, all these underlie the maker of poems, the
Answerer.

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,
They give you to form for yourself poems, religions, politics,
war, peace, behavior, histories, essays, daily life, and
every thing else,
They balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes,
They do not seek beauty, they are sought,
Forever touching them or close upon them follows beauty,
longing, fain, love-sick.

They prepare for death, yet they are not the finish, but rather 80
the outset,
They bring none to his or her terminus or to be content and
full,
Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of
stars, to learn one of the meanings,
To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the cease-
less rings and never be quiet again.

1855

1881

*Our Old Feuillage*¹

ALWAYS our old feuillage!

Always Florida's green peninsula—always the priceless delta of Louisiana—always the cotton-fields of Alabama and Texas,

Always California's golden hills and hollows, and the silver mountains of New Mexico—always soft-breath'd Cuba,

Always the vast slope drain'd by the Southern sea,² inseparable with the slopes drain'd by the Eastern and Western seas,

The area the eighty-third year of these States, the three and a half millions of square miles,

The eighteen thousand miles of sea-coast and bay-coast on the main, the thirty thousand miles of river navigation,

The seven millions of distinct families and the same number of dwellings—always these, and more, branching forth into numberless branches,

Always the free range and diversity—always the continent of Democracy;

Always the prairies, pastures, forests, vast cities, travelers, Kanada, the snows;

Always these compact lands tied at the hips with the belt stringing the huge oval lakes;³ 10

Always the West with strong native persons, the increasing density there, the habitans, friendly, threatening, ironical, scorning invaders;

All sights, South, North, East—all deeds promiscuously done at all times,

All characters, movements, growths, a few noticed, myriads unnoticed,

Through Mannahatta's streets I walking, these things gathering,

On interior rivers by night in the glare of pine knots, steam-boats wooding up.⁴

Sunlight by day on the valley of the Susquehanna, and on the valleys of the Potomac and Rappahannock, and the valleys of the Roanoke and Delaware,

In their northerly wilds beasts of prey haunting the Adirondacks the hills, or lapping the Saginaw waters to drink,

¹ Leaves, related to the symbolical title of the book.

² Gulf of Mexico.

³ The Great Lakes.

⁴ Taking on wood for fuel.

In a lonesome inlet a sheldrake lost from the flock, sitting on
 the water rocking silently,
 In farmer's barns oxen in the stable, their harvest labor done,
 they rest standing, they are too tired,
 Afar on arctic ice the she-walrus lying drowsily while her cubs 20
 play around,
 The hawk sailing where men have not yet sail'd, the farthest
 polar sea, ripply, crystalline, open, beyond the floes,
 White drift spooning ahead where the ship in the tempest
 dashes,
 On solid land what is done in cities as the bells strike mid-
 night together,
 In primitive woods the sounds there also sounding, the howl
 of the wolf, the scream of the panther, and the hoarse
 bellow of the elk,
 In winter beneath the hard blue ice of Moosehead lake, in
 summer visible through the clear waters, the great trout
 swimming,
 In lower latitudes in warmer air in the Carolinas the large
 black buzzard floating slowly high beyond the tree tops,
 Below, the red cedar festoon'd with tylandria,¹ the pines and
 cypresses growing out of the white sand that spreads far
 and flat,
 Rude boats descending the big Pedee, climbing plants, para-
 sites with color'd flowers and berries enveloping huge
 trees,
 The waving drapery on the live-oak trailing long and low,
 noiselessly waved by the wind.²
 The camp of Georgia wagoners just after dark, the supper- 30
 fires and the cooking and eating by whites and negroes,
 Thirty or forty great wagons, the mules, cattle, horses, feed-
 ing from troughs,
 The shadows, gleams, up under the leaves of the old sycam-
 ore-trees, the flames with the black smoke from the
 pitch-pine curling and rising;
 Southern fishermen fishing, the sounds and inlets of North
 Carolina's coast, the shad-fishery and the herring-
 fishery, the large sweep-seines, the windlasses on shore
 work'd by horses, the clearing, curing, and packing-
 houses;³

¹ Prof. Killis Campbell suggests that perhaps *tillandsia*, a Southern moss, is intended.

² Spanish moss.

³ A factory for preparing meats or other foodstuffs for ship-
 ment or preservation.

Deep in the forest in piney woods turpentine dropping from
 the incisions in the trees, there are the turpentine works,
 There are the negroes at work in good health, the ground in
 all directions is cover'd with pine straw;
 In Tennessee and Kentucky slaves busy in the coalings,¹ at
 the forge, by the furnace-blaze, or at the corn-shucking,²
 In Virginia, the planter's son returning after a long absence,
 joyfully welcom'd and kiss'd by the aged mulatto nurse,
 On rivers boatmen safely moor'd at nightfall in their boats
 under shelter of high banks,
 Some of the younger men dance to the sound of the banjo or
 fiddle, others sit on the gunwale smoking and talking;
 Late in the afternoon the mocking-bird, the American mimic, 40
 singing in the Great Dismal Swamp,
 There are the greenish waters, the resinous odor, the plen-
 teous moss, the cypress-tree, and the juniper-tree;
 Northward, young men of Mannahatta, the target company
 from an excursion returning home at evening, the mus-
 ket-muzzles all bear bunches of flowers presented by
 women;
 Children at play, or on his father's lap a young boy fallen
 asleep, (how his lips move! how he smiles in his sleep!)
 The scout riding on horseback over the plains west of the
 Mississippi, he ascends a knoll and sweeps his eyes
 around;
 California life, the miner, bearded, dress'd in his rude cos-
 tume, the stanch California friendship, the sweet air, the
 graves one in passing meets solitary just aside the horse-
 path;
 Down in Texas the cotton-field, the negro-cabins, drivers
 driving mules or oxen before rude carts, cotton bales
 piled on banks and wharves;
 Encircling all, vast-darting up and wide, the American Soul,
 with equal hemispheres, one Love, one Dilation or Pride;
 In arriere the peace-talk with the Iroquois the aborigines, the
 calumet, the pipe of good-will, arbitration, and indorse-
 ment,
 The sachem³ blowing the smoke first toward the sun and then
 toward the earth,
 The drama of the scalp-dance enacted with painted faces and 50
 guttural exclamations,
 The setting out of the war-party, the long and stealthy
 march,

¹ Collieries.

² Husking of Indian corn.

³ Indian chief.

The single file, the swinging hatchets, the surprise and
 slaughter of enemies;
 All the acts, scenes, ways, persons, attitudes of these States,
 reminiscences, institutions,
 All these States compact, every square mile of these States
 without excepting a particle;
 Me pleas'd, rambling in lanes and country fields, Paumanok's
 fields,
 Observing the spiral flight of two little yellow butterflies
 shuffling between each other, ascending high in the air,
 The darting swallow, the destroyer of insects, the fall traveler
 southward but returning northward early in the spring,
 The country boy at the close of the day driving the herd of
 cows and shouting to them as they loiter to browse by
 the roadside,
 The city wharf, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston,
 New Orleans, San Francisco,
 The departing ships when the sailors heave at the capstan;
 Evening—me in my room—the setting sun,
 The setting summer sun shining in my open window, showing
 the swarm of flies, suspended, balancing in the air in the
 centre of the room, darting athwart, up and down, cast-
 ing swift shadows in specks on the opposite wall where
 the shine is;
 The athletic American matron speaking in public to crowds
 of listeners,
 Males, females, immigrants, combinations, the copiousness,
 the individuality of the States, each for itself—the
 money-makers,
 Factories, machinery, the mechanical forces, the windlass,
 lever, pulley, all certainties,
 The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity,
 In space the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars—on the
 firm earth, the lands, my lands,
 O lands! all so dear to me—what you are, (whatever it is,) I
 putting it at random in these songs, become a part of
 that, whatever it is,
 Southward there, I screaming, with wings slow flapping, with
 the myriads of gulls wintering along the coasts of Florida,
 Otherways there atwixt the banks of the Arkansas, the Rio
 Grande, the Nueces, the Brazos, the Tombigbee, the
 Red River, the Saskatchewan or the Osage, I with the
 spring waters laughing and skipping and running,
 Northward, on the sands, on some shallow bay of Paumanok,
 I with parties of snowy herons wading in the wet to seek
 worms and aquatic plants,

60

70

Retreating, triumphantly twittering, the king-bird,¹ from
piercing the crow with its bill, for amusement—and I
triumphantly twittering,
The migrating flock of wild geese alighting in autumn to
refresh themselves, the body of the flock feed, the sen-
tinels outside move around with erect heads watching,
and are from time to time reliev'd by other sentinels—
and I feeding and taking turns with the rest,
In Kanadian forests the moose, large as an ox, corner'd by
hunters, rising desperately on his hind-feet, and plung-
ing with his fore-feet, the hoofs as sharp as knives—and
I, plunging at the hunters, corner'd and desperate,
In the Mannahatta, streets, piers, shipping, store-houses, and
the countless workmen working in the shops,
And I too of the Mannahatta, singing thereof—and no less in
myself than the whole of the Mannahatta in itself,
Singing the song of These, my ever-united lands—my body
no more inevitably united, part to part, and made out of
a thousand diverse contributions one identity, any more
than my lands are inevitably united and made ONE
IDENTITY;
Nativities, climates, the grass of the great pastoral Plains,
Cities, labors, death, animals, products, war, good and evil—
these me,
These affording, in all their particulars, the old feuillage to 80
me and to America, how can I do less than pass the clew
of the union of them, to afford the like to you?
Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine leaves, that
you also be eligible as I am?
How can I but as here chanting, invite you for yourself to
collect bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of these
States?

1860

1881

¹ This American tyrant flycatcher attacks larger birds, especially in the breeding season.

A Song of Joys

O to make the most jubilant song!
Full of music—full of manhood, womanhood, infancy!
Full of common employments—full of grain and trees.

O for the voices of animals—O for the swiftness and balance
of fishes!

O for the dropping of raindrops in a song!

O for the sunshine and motion of waves in a song!

O the joy of my spirit—it is uncaged—it darts like lightning!
It is not enough to have this globe or a certain time,
I will have thousands of globes and all time.

O the engineer's joys! to go with a locomotive!
To hear the hiss of steam, the merry shriek, the steam-whistle,
the laughing locomotive!
To push with resistless way and speed off in the distance.

10

O the gleesome saunter over fields and hillsides!
The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds, the moist
fresh stillness of the woods,
The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak, and all through
the forenoon.

O the horseman's and horsewoman's joys!
The saddle, the gallop, the pressure upon the seat, the cool
gurgling by the ears and hair.

O the fireman's joys!
I hear the alarm at dead of night,
I hear bells, shouts! I pass the crowd, I run!
The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.

20

O the joy of the strong-brawn'd fighter, towering in the arena
in perfect condition, conscious of power, thirsting to
meet his opponent.

O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only the
human soul is capable of generating and emitting in
steady and limitless floods.

O the mother's joys!
The watching, the endurance, the precious love, the anguish,
the patiently yielded life.

O the joy of increase, growth, recuperation,
The joy of soothing and pacifying, the joy of concord and
harmony.

O to go back to the place where I was born,
To hear the birds sing once more,
To ramble about the house and barn and over the fields once
more, 30
And through the orchard and along the old lanes once more.

O to have been brought up on bays, lagoons, creeks, or along
the coast,
To continue and be employ'd there all my life,
The briny and damp smell, the shore, the salt weeds exposed
at low water,
The work of fishermen, the work of the eel-fisher and clam-
fisher;

I come with my clam-rake and spade, I come with my eel-
spear,
Is the tide out? I join the group of clam-diggers on the flats,
I laugh and work with them, I joke at my work like a mettle-
some young man;

In winter I take my eel-basket and eel-spear and travel out on
foot on the ice—I have a small axe to cut holes in the ice,
Behold me well-clothed going gayly or returning in the 40
afternoon, my brood of tough boys accompanying me,
My brood of grown and part-grown boys, who love to be
with no one else so well as they love to be with me,
By day to work with me, and by night to sleep with me.

Another time in warm weather out in a boat, to lift the
lobster-pots where they are sunk with heavy stones, (I
know the buoys,)

O the sweetness of the Fifth-month morning upon the water
as I row just before sunrise toward the buoys,
I pull the wicker pots up slantingly, the dark green lobsters
are desperate with their claws as I take them out, I insert
wooden pegs in the joints of their pincers,
I go to all the places one after another, and then row back to
the shore,
There in a huge kettle of boiling water the lobsters shall be
boil'd till their color becomes scarlet.

Another time mackerel-taking,
Voracious, mad for the hook, near the surface, they seem to
fill the water for miles;
Another time fishing for rock-fish in Chesapeake Bay, I one 50
of the brown-faced crew;
Another time trailing for blue-fish off Paumanok, I stand
with braced body,
My left foot is on the gunwale, my right arm throws far out
the coils of slender rope,
In sight around me the quick veering and darting of fifty
skiffs, my companions.

O boating on the rivers,
The voyage down the St. Lawrence, the superb scenery, the
steamers,
The ships sailing, the Thousand Islands, the occasional tim-
ber-raft and the raftsmen with long-reaching sweep-oars,
The little huts on the rafts, and the stream of smoke when
they cook supper at evening.

(O something pernicious and dread!
Something far away from a puny and pious life!
Something unproved! something in a trance! 60
Something escaped from the anchorage and driving free.)

O to work in mines, or forging iron,
Foundry casting, the foundry itself, the rude high roof, the
ample and shadow'd space,
The furnace, the hot liquid pour'd out and running.

O to resume the joys of the soldier!
To feel the presence of a brave commanding officer—to feel
his sympathy!
To behold his calmness—to be warm'd in the rays of his
smile!
To go to battle—to hear the bugles play and the drums beat!
To hear the crash of artillery—to see the glittering of the
bayonets and musket-barrels in the sun!
To see men fall and die and not complain! 70
To taste the savage taste of blood—to be so devilish!
To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the enemy.

O the whaleman's joys! O I cruise my old cruise again!
I feel the ship's motion under me, I feel the Atlantic breezes
fanning me,
I hear the cry again sent down from the mast-head, *There—
she blows!*

Again I spring up the rigging to look with the rest—we descend, wild with excitement,
I leap in the lower'd boat, we row toward our prey where he lies,
We approach stealthy and silent, I see the mountainous mass, lethargic, basking,
I see the harpooner standing up, I see the weapon dart from his vigorous arm;
O swift again far out in the ocean the wounded whale, settling, running to windward, tows me,
Again I see him rise to breathe, we row close again,
I see a lance driven through his side, press'd deep, turn'd in the wound,
Again we back off, I see him settle again, the life is leaving him fast,
As he rises he spouts blood, I see him swim in circles narrower and narrower, swiftly cutting the water—I see him die,
He gives one convulsive leap in the centre of the circle, and then falls flat and still in the bloody foam.

80

O the old manhood of me, my noblest joy of all!
My children and grand-children, my white hair and beard,
My largeness, calmness, majesty, out of the long stretch of my life.

O ripen'd joy of womanhood! O happiness at last!
I am more than eighty years of age, I am the most venerable mother,
How clear is my mind—how all people draw nigh to me!
What attractions are these beyond any before? what bloom more than the bloom of youth?
What beauty is this that descends upon me and rises out of me?

90

O the orator's joys!
To inflate the chest, to roll the thunder of the voice out from the ribs and throat,
To make the people rage, weep, hate, desire, with yourself,
To lead America—to quell America with a great tongue.

O the joy of my soul leaning pois'd on itself, receiving identity through materials and loving them, observing characters and absorbing them,
My soul vibrated back to me from them, from sight, hearing, touch, reason, articulation, comparison, memory, and the like,

The real life of my senses and flesh transcending my senses 100
and flesh,
My body done with materials, my sight done with my
material eyes,
Proved to me this day beyond cavil that it is not my material
eyes which finally see,
Nor my material body which finally loves, walks, laughs,
shouts, embraces, procreates.

O the farmer's joys!
Ohioan's, Illinoisian's, Wisconsinese', Kanadian's, Iowan's,
Kansian's, Missourian's, Oregonese' joys!
To rise at peep of day and pass forth nimbly to work,
To plough land in the fall for winter-sown crops,
To plough land in the spring for maize,
To train orchards, to graft the trees, to gather apples in the
fall.

O to bathe in the swimming-bath, or in a good place along 110
shore,
To splash the water! to walk ankle-deep, or race naked along
the shore.

O to realize space!
The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,
To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and flying
clouds, as one with them.

O the joy of a manly self-hood!
To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any tyrant
known or unknown,
To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and elastic,
To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye,
To speak with a full and sonorous voice out of a broad chest,
To confront with your personality all the other personalities 120
of the earth.

Know'st thou the excellent joys of youth?
Joys of the dear companions and of the merry word and
laughing face?
Joy of the glad light-beaming day, joy of the wide-breath'd
games?
Joy of sweet music, joy of the lighted ball-room and the
dancers?
Joy of the plenteous dinner, strong carouse and drinking?

Yet O my soul supreme!
 Know'st thou the joys of pensive thought?
 Joys of the free and lonesome heart, the tender, gloomy
 heart?
 Joys of the solitary walk, the spirit bow'd yet proud, the
 suffering and the struggle?
 The agonistic throes, the ecstasies, joys of the solemn mus- 130
 ings day or night?
 Joys of the thought of Death, the great spheres Time and
 Space?
 Prophetic joys of better, loftier love's ideals, the divine wife,
 the sweet, eternal, perfect comrade?
 Joys all thine own undying one, joys worthy thee O soul.

 O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a slave,
 To meet life as a powerful conqueror,
 No fumes, no ennui, no more complaints or scornful
 criticisms,
 To these proud laws of the air, the water and the ground,
 proving my interior soul impregnable,
 And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me.

 For not life's joys alone I sing, repeating—the joy of death!
 The beautiful touch of Death, soothing and benumbing a 140
 few moments, for reasons,
 Myself discharging my excrementitious body to be burn'd, or
 render'd to powder, or buried,
 My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres,
 My voided body nothing more to me, returning to the puri-
 fications, further offices, eternal uses of the earth.

 O to attract by more than attraction!
 How it is I know not—yet behold! the something which
 obeys none of the rest,
 It is offensive, never defensive—yet how magnetic it draws.

 O to struggle against great odds, to meet enemies undaunted!
 To be entirely alone with them, to find how much one can
 stand!
 To look strife, torture, prison, popular odium, face to
 face!
 To mount the scaffold, to advance to the muzzles of guns 150
 with perfect nonchalance!
 To be indeed a God!

 O to sail to sea in a ship!
 To leave this steady unendurable land,

To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the sidewalks
and the houses,
To leave you O you solid motionless land, and entering a
ship,
To sail and sail and sail!

O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys!
To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on, float
on!
To be a sailor of the world bound for all ports,
A ship itself, (see indeed these sails I spread to the sun and 160
air,)
A swift and swelling ship full of rich words, full of joys. 1860 1881

Song of the Broad-Axe

I

WEAPON shapely, naked, wan,
Head from the mother's bowels drawn,
Wooded flesh and metal bone, limb only one and lip only one,
Gray-blue leaf by red-heat grown, helve produced from a
little seed sown,
Resting the grass amid and upon,
To be lean'd and to lean on.

Strong shapes and attributes of strong shapes, masculine
trades, sights and sounds,
Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music,
Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys of the
great organ.

2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind, 10
Welcome are lands of pine and oak,
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig,
Welcome are lands of gold,
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize, welcome those of the
grape,
Welcome are lands of sugar and rice, 156

Welcome the cotton-lands, welcome those of the white
 potato and sweet potato,
 Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies,
 Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, openings,
 Welcome the measureless grazing-lands, welcome the teem-
 ing soil of orchards, flax, honey, hemp;
 Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands, 20
 Lands rich as lands of gold or wheat and fruit lands,
 Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores,
 Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc.
 Lands of iron—lands of the make of the axe.

3

The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it,
 The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space clear'd
 for a garden,
 The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves after the
 storm is lull'd,
 The wailing and moaning at intervals, the thought of the sea,
 The thought of ships struck in the storm and put on their
 beam ends, and the cutting away of masts,
 The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd houses 30
 and barns,
 The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a venture
 of men, families, goods,
 The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,
 The voyage of those who sought a New England and found
 it, the outset anywhere,
 The settlements of the Arkansas, Colorado, Ottawa, Willa-
 mette,
 The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-bags;
 The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,
 The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men with their clear
 untrimm'd faces,
 The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on
 themselves,
 The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies, the
 boundless impatience of restraint,
 The loose drift of character, the inkling through random 40
 types, the solidification;
 The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard
 schooners and sloops, the raftsmen, the pioneer,
 Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the woods,
 stripes of snow on the limbs of trees, the occasional
 snapping,

The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry song, the
 natural life of the woods, the strong day's work,
 The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the talk,
 the bed of hemlock-boughs and the bear-skin;
 The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,
 The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,
 The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places,
 laying them regular,
 Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortices according as
 they were prepared,
 The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men,
 their curv'd limbs,
 Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, holding 50
 on by posts and braces,
 The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the
 axe,
 The floor-men forcing the planks close to be nail'd,
 Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the
 bearers,
 The echoes resounding through the vacant building;
 The huge storehouse carried up in the city well under way,
 The six framing-men, two in the middle and two at each end,
 carefully bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick for a
 cross-beam,
 The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right hands
 rapidly laying the long side-wall, two hundred feet from
 front to rear,
 The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of the
 trowels striking the bricks,
 The bricks one after another each laid so workmanlike in its
 place, and set with a knock of the trowel-handle,
 The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-boards, and 60
 the steady replenishing by the hod-men;
 Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of well-
 grown apprentices,
 The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log shaping it
 toward the shape of a mast,
 The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly into the
 pine,
 The butter-color'd chips flying off in great flakes and slivers,
 The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in easy
 costumes,
 The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-heads, floats,
 stays against the sea;
 The city fireman, the fire that suddenly bursts forth in the
 close-pack'd square,

The arriving engines, the hoarse shouts, the nimble stepping
 and daring,
 The strong command through the fire-trumpets, the falling in
 line, the rise and fall of the arms forcing the water,¹
 The slender, spasmodic, blue-white jets, the bringing to bear of 70
 the hooks and ladders and their execution,
 The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or through
 floors if the fire smoulders under them,
 The crowd with their lit faces watching, the glare and dense
 shadows;
 The forger at his forge-furnace and the user of iron after him,
 The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder and
 temperer,
 The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel and trying
 the edge with his thumb,
 The one who clean-shapes the handle and sets it firmly in the
 socket;
 The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past users
 also,
 The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,
 The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,
 The Roman lictors preceding the consuls, 80
 The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,
 The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted head,
 The death-howl, the limpsy tumbling body, the rush of
 friend and foe thither,
 The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,
 The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates, the
 truce and parley,
 The sack of an old city in its time,
 The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously and
 disorderly,
 Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,
 Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of
 women in the gripe of brigands,
 Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old per- 90
 sons despairing,
 The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,
 The list of all executive deeds and words just or unjust,
 The power of personality just or unjust.

4

Muscle and pluck forever!
 What invigorates life invigorates death,

¹ Early fire-engines had hand pumps.

And the dead advance as much as the living advance,
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,
For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much
as the delicatessen¹ of the earth and of man,
And nothing endures but personal qualities.

What do you think endures?

100

Do you think a great city endures?

Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared constitution?
or the best built steamships?

Or hotels of granite and iron? or any chef-d'œuvres² of engineering,
forts, armaments?

Away! these are not to be cherish'd for themselves,

They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians play for them,

The show passes, all does well enough of course,

All does very well till one flash of defiance.

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,

If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.

5

The place where a great city stands is not the place of stretch'd wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of produce merely,

110

Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the anchor-lifters of the departing,

Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops selling goods from the rest of the earth,

Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place where money is plentiest,

Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and bards,

Where the city stands that is belov'd by these, and loves them in return and understands them,

Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words and deeds,

Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,

Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,

Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,

120

Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons,

¹ Delicacy.

² Masterpieces.

Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the
 whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves,
 Where outside authority enters always after the precedence
 of inside authority,
 Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and Presi-
 dent, Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for
 pay,
 Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to
 depend on themselves,
 Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,
 Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,
 Where women walk in public processions in the streets the
 same as the men,
 Where they enter the public assembly and take places the
 same as the men;
 Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,
 Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,
 Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,
 Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,
 There the great city stands.

130

6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed!
 How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels before a
 man's or woman's look!

All waits or goes by default till a strong being appears;
 A strong being is the proof of the race and of the ability of the
 universe,
 When he or she appears materials are overaw'd,
 The dispute on the soul stops,
 The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd back, or
 laid away.

140

What is your money-making now? what can it do now?
 What is your respectability now?
 What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions, statute-
 books, now?
 Where are your jibes of being now?
 Where are your cavils about the soul now?

7

A sterile landscape covers the ore, there is as good as the best
 for all the forbidding appearance,
 There is the mine, there are the miners,

The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd, the
hammers-men are at hand with their tongs and hammers,
What always served and always serves is at hand.

150

Than this nothing has better served, it has served all,
Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and long
ere the Greek,

Served in building the buildings that last longer than any,
Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient Hindu-
stanee,

Served the mound-raiser¹ on the Mississippi, served those
whose relics remain in Central America,

Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn
pillars and the druids,

Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the snow-
cover'd hills of Scandinavia,

Served those who time out of mind made on the granite
walls rough sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships,
ocean waves,

Served the paths of the irruption of the Goths, served the
pastoral tribes and nomads,

Served the long distant Kelt, served the hardy pirates of the 160
Baltic,

Served before any of those the venerable and harmless men
of Ethiopia,

Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure and
the making of those for war,

Served all great works on land and all great works on the sea,
For the mediaeval ages and before the mediaeval ages,
Served not the living only then as now, but served the dead.

8

I see the European headsman,
He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs and strong
naked arms,
And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately European headsman?
Whose is that blood upon you so wet and sticky?)

170

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs,
I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,
Ghosts of dead lords, uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd ministers,
rejected kings,
Rivals, traitors, poisoners, disgraced chieftains and the rest.

¹ Mound-builder.

I see those who in any land have died for the good cause,
The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run out,
(Mind you O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall never
run out.)

I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe,
Both blade and helve are clean,
They spirt no more the blood of European nobles, they clasp 180
no more the necks of queens.

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless,
I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy, I see no longer any
axe upon it,
I see the mighty and friendly emblem of the power of my own
race, the newest, largest race.

9

(America! I do not vaunt my love for you,
I have what I have.)

The axe leaps!
The solid forest gives fluid utterances,
They tumble forth, they rise and form,
Hut, tent, landing, survey,
Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade, 190
Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, jamb, lath, panel, gable,
Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ, exhibition-house,
library,
Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, turret, porch,
Hoe, rake, pitchfork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-plane,
mallet, wedge, rounce,
Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,
Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame, and what
not,
Capitols of States, and capitol of the nation of States,
Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans or for
the poor or sick,
Manhattan steamboats and clippers taking the measure of all
seas.

The shapes arise! 200
Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users and all that
neighbors them,
Cutters down of wood and haulers of it to the Penobscot or
Kennebec,
Dwellers in cabins among the Californian mountains or by
the little lakes, or on the Columbia,

Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande,
friendly gatherings, the characters and fun,
Dwellers along the St. Lawrence, or north in Kanada, or
down by the Yellowstone, dwellers on coasts and off
coasts,
Seal-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages
through the ice.

The shapes arise!
Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets,
Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads,
Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks, girders, 210
arches,
Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal craft,
river craft,
Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western
seas, and in many a bay and by-place,
The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the hack-
matack-roots¹ for knees,
The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds, the
workmen busy outside and inside,
The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger, the
adze, bolt, line, square, gouge, and bead-plane.

10

The shapes arise!
The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,
The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his shroud,
The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the posts
of the bride's bed,
The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers be- 220
neath, the shape of the babe's cradle,
The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for dancer's
feet,
The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of the
friendly parents and children,
The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young man
and woman, the roof over the well-married young man
and woman,
The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste wife,
and joyously eaten by the chaste husband, content after
his day's work.

¹ The American larch.

The shapes arise!

The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room, and of
him or her seated in the place.

The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the young rum-
drinker and the old rum-drinker,

The shape of the shamed and angry stairs trod by sneaking
footsteps,

The shape of the sly settee, and the adulterous unwholesome
couple,

The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish winnings 230
and losings,

The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and sentenced
murderer, the murderer with haggard face and pinion'd
arms,

The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and white-
lipp'd crowd, the dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise!

Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances,

The door passing the dissever'd friend flush'd and in haste,

The door that admits good news and bad news,

The door whence the son left home confident and puff'd up,

The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous ab-
sence, diseas'd, broken down, without innocence, with-
out means.

II

Her shape arises,

She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever, 240

The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her gross
and soil'd,

She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is conceal'd
from her,

She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor,

She is the best belov'd, it is without exception, she has no
reason to fear and she does not fear,

Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions are idle
to her as she passes,

She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do not offend
her,

She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them, she is
strong,

She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger than
she is.

The main shapes arise!
 Shapes of Democracy total, result of centuries,
 Shapes ever projecting other shapes,
 Shapes of turbulent manly cities,
 Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole earth,
 Shapes bracing the earth and braced with the whole earth.

1856

1881

250

*Song of the Exposition*¹

I

(Ah little reck's the laborer,
 How near his work is holding him to God,
 The loving Laborer through space and time.)

After all not to create only, or found only,
 But to bring perhaps from afar what is already founded,
 To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free,
 To fill the gross the torpid bulk with vital religious fire,
 Not to repel or destroy so much as accept, fuse, rehabilitate,
 To obey as well as command, to follow more than to lead,
 These also are the lessons of our New World;
 While how little the New after all, how much the Old, Old
 World!

Long and long has the grass been growing,
 Long and long has the rain been falling,
 Long has the globe been rolling round.

2

Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,
 Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,
 That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas', Odys-
 seus' wanderings,
 Placard 'Removed' and 'To Let' on the rocks of your
 snowy Parnassus,
 Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's ² gate and
 on Mount Moriah,³

¹ Poem read by Whitman at the opening of the American Institute exhibition, New York, 7th September 1871.

² The biblical Joppa. ³ Site of the Temple at Jerusalem.

The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish
castles, and Italian collections, 20
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried
domain awaits, demands you.

3

Responsive to our summons,
Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,
Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,
She comes! I hear the rustling of her gown,
I scent the odor of her breath's delicious fragrance,
I mark her step divine, her curious eyes a-turning, rolling,
Upon this very scene.

The dame of dames! can I believe then,
Those ancient temples, sculptures classic, could none of them 30
retain her?
Nor shades of Virgil and Dante, nor myriad memories,
poems, old associations, magnetize and hold on to her?
But that she 's left them all—and here?

Yes, if you will allow me to say so,
I, my friends, if you do not, can plainly see her,
The same undying soul of earth's, activity's, beauty's, hero-
ism's expression,
Out from her evolutions hither come, ended the strata of her
former themes,
Hidden and cover'd by to-day's, foundation of to-day's,
Ended, deceas'd through time, her voice by Castaly's foun-
tain,
Silent the broken-lipp'd Sphynx in Egypt, silent all those
century-baffling tombs,
Ended for aye the epics of Asia's, Europe's helmeted war- 40
riors, ended the primitive call of the muses,
Calliope's call forever closed, Clio, Melpomene, Thalia dead,
Ended the stately rhythmus of Una and Oriana, ended the
quest of the Holy Graal,
Jerusalem a handful of ashes blown by the wind, extinct,
The Crusaders' streams of shadowy midnight troops sped
with the sunrise,
Amadis, Tancred, utterly gone, Charlemagne, Roland,
Oliver gone,
Palmerin, ogre, departed, vanish'd the turrets that Usk from
its waters reflected,
Arthur vanish'd with all his knights, Merlin and Lancelot

and Galahad, all gone, dissolv'd utterly like an exhalation;
Pass'd! pass'd! for us, forever pass'd, that once so mighty
world, now void, inanimate, phantom world,
Embroider'd, dazzling, foreign world, with all its gorgeous
legends, myths,
Its kings and castles proud, its priests and warlike lords and
courtly dames, 50
Pass'd to its charnel vault, coffin'd with crown and armor on,
Blazon'd with Shakspeare's purple page,
And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

I say I see, my friends, if you do not, the illustrious emigré,
(having it is true in her day, although the same, changed,
journey'd considerable,)
Making directly for this rendezvous, vigorously clearing a
path for herself, striding through the confusion,
By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismay'd,
Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial fertil-
izers,
Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,
She 's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

4

But hold—don't I forget my manners?
To introduce the stranger, (what else indeed do I live to
chant for?) to thee Columbia;
In liberty's name welcome immortal! clasp hands,
And ever henceforth sisters dear be both. 60

Fear not O Muse! truly new ways and days receive, surround
you,
I candidly confess a queer, queer race, of novel fashion,
And yet the same old human race, the same within, without,
Faces and hearts the same, feelings the same, yearnings the
same,
The same old love, beauty and use the same.

5

We do not blame thee elder World, nor really separate our-
selves from thee,
(Would the son separate himself from the father?) 70
Looking back on thee, seeing thee to thy duties, grandeurs,
through past ages bending, building,
We build to ours to-day.

Mightier than Egypt's tombs,
Fairer than Grecia's, Roma's temples,
Prouder than Milan's statued, spired, cathedral,
More picturesque than Rhenish castle-keeps,
We plan even now to raise, beyond them all,
Thy great cathedral sacred industry, no tomb,
A keep for life for practical invention.

As in a waking vision,
E'en while I chant I see it rise, I scan and prophesy outside
and in,
Its manifold ensemble.

80

Around a palace, loftier, fairer, ampler than any yet,
Earth's modern wonder, history's seven outstripping,
High rising tier on tier with glass and iron façades,
Gladdening the sun and sky, enhued in cheerfulest hues,
Bronze, lilac, robin's-egg, marine and crimson,
Over whose golden roof shall flaunt, beneath thy banner
Freedom,
The banners of the States and flags of every land,
A brood of lofty, fair, but lesser palaces shall cluster.

90

Somewhere within their walls shall all that forwards perfect
human life be started,
Tried, taught, advanced, visibly exhibited.

Not only all the world of works, trade, products,
But all the workmen of the world here to be represented.

Here shall you trace in flowing operation,
In every state of practical, busy movement, the rills of civili-
zation,

Materials here under your eye shall change their shape as if
my magic,

The cotton shall be pick'd almost in the very field,
Shall be dried, clean'd, ginn'd, baled, spun into thread and
cloth before you,

You shall see hands at work at all the old processes and all
the new ones, 100

You shall see the various grains and how flour is made and
then bread baked by the bakers,

You shall see the crude ores of California and Nevada passing
on and on till they become bullion,

You shall watch how the printer sets type, and learn what a
composing-stick is,

You shall mark in amazement the Hoe press whirling its
cylinders, shedding the printed leaves steady and fast,
The photograph, model, watch, pin, nail, shall be created
before you.

In large calm halls, a stately museum shall teach you the
infinite lessons of minerals,
In another, woods, plants, vegetation shall be illustrated—in
another animals, animal life and development.

One stately house shall be the music house,
Others for other arts—learning, the sciences, shall all be here,
None shall be slighted, none but shall here be honor'd, 110
help'd, exempl'd.

6

(This, this and these, America, shall be *your* pyramids and
obelisks,
Your Alexandrian Pharos, gardens of Babylon,
Your temple at Olympia.)

The male and female many laboring not,
Shall ever here confront the laboring many,
With precious benefits to both, glory to all,
To thee America, and thee eternal Muse.

And here shall ye inhabit powerful Matrons!
In your vast state vaster than all the old,
Echoed through long, long centuries to come, 120
To sound of different, prouder songs, with stronger themes,
Practical, peaceful life, the people's life, the People them-
selves,
Lifted, illumin'd, bathed in peace—elate, secure in peace.

7

Away with themes of war! away with war itself!
Hence from my shuddering sight to never more return that
show of blacken'd, mutilated corpses!
That hell unpent and raid of blood, fit for wild tigers or for
lop-tongued wolves, not reasoning men,
And in its stead speed industry's campaigns,
With thy undaunted armies, engineering,
Thy pennants labor, loosen'd to the breeze,
Thy bugles sounding loud and clear. 130

Away with old romance!
Away with novels, plots and plays of foreign courts,
Away with love-verses, sugar'd in rhyme, the intrigues,
 amours of idlers,
Fitted for only banquets of the night where dancers to late
 music slide,
The unhealthy pleasures, extravagant dissipation of the few,
With perfumes, heat and wine, beneath the dazzling chan-
 deliers.

To you ye reverent sane sisters,
I raise a voice for far superber themes for poets and for art,
To exalt the present and the real,
To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and 140
 trade,
To sing in songs how exercise and chemical life are never to
 be baffled,
To manual work for each and all, to plough, hoe, dig,
To plant and tend the tree, the berry, vegetables, flowers,
For every man to see to it that he really do something, for
 every woman too;
To use the hammer and the saw, (rip, or cross-cut,)
To cultivate a turn for carpentering, plastering, painting,
To work as tailor, tailoress, nurse, hostler, porter,
To invent a little, something ingenious, to aid the washing,
 cooking, cleaning,
And hold it no disgrace to take a hand at them themselves.

I say I bring thee Muse to-day and here, 150
All occupations, duties broad and close,
Toil, healthy toil and sweat, endless, without cessation,
The old, old practical burdens, interests, joys,
The family, parentage, childhood, husband and wife,
The house-comforts, the house itself and all its belongings,
Food and its preservation, chemistry applied to it,
Whatever forms the average, strong, complete, sweet-blooded
 man or woman, the perfect *longeve*¹ personality,
And helps its present life to health and happiness, and shapes
 its soul,
For the eternal real life to come.

With latest connections, works, the inter-transportation of 160
 the world,
Steam-power, the great express lines, gas, petroleum,

¹ A Whitman contraction for *longevous*.

These triumphs of our time, the Atlantic's delicate cable,
The Pacific railroad, the Suez canal, the Mont Cenis and
Gothard and Hoosac¹ tunnels, the Brooklyn bridge,
The earth all spann'd with iron rails, with lines of steamships
threading every sea,
Our own rondure, the current globe I bring.

8

And thou America,
Thy offspring towering e'er so high, yet higher Thee above all
towering,
With Victory on thy left, and at thy right hand Law;
Thou Union holding all, fusing, absorbing, tolerating all,
Thee, ever thee, I sing.

170

Thou, also thou, a World,
With all thy wide geographies, manifold, different, distant,
Rounded by thee in one—one common orbic language,
One common indivisible destiny for All.

And by the spells which ye vouchsafe to those your ministers
in earnest,
I here personify and call my themes, to make them pass
before ye.

Behold, America! (and thou, ineffable guest and sister!)
For thee come trooping up thy waters and thy lands;
Behold! thy fields and farms, thy far-off woods and moun-
tains,

As in procession coming.

180

Behold, the sea itself,
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships;
See, where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle the
green and blue,
See, the steamers coming and going, steaming in or out of
port,
See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.

Behold, in Oregon, far in the north and west,
Or in Maine, far in the north and east, thy cheerful axemen,
Wielding all day their axes.

Behold, on the lakes, thy pilots at their wheels, thy oarsmen,
How the ash² writhes under those muscular arms!

190

¹ In western Massachusetts.

² Used for making oars.

There by the furnace, and there by the anvil,
Behold thy sturdy blacksmiths swinging their sledges,
Overhand so steady, overhand they turn and fall with joyous
clank,
Like a tumult of laughter.

Mark the spirit of invention everywhere, thy rapid patents,
Thy continual workshops, foundries, risen or rising,
See, from their chimneys how the tall flame-fires stream.

Mark, thy interminable farms, North, South,
Thy wealthy daughter-states, Eastern and Western,
The varied products of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, 200
Georgia, Texas, and the rest,
Thy limitless crops, grass, wheat, sugar, oil, corn, rice, hemp,
hops,
Thy barns all fill'd, the endless freight-train and the bulging
storehouse,
The grapes that ripen on thy vines, the apples in thy orchards,
Thy incalculable lumber, beef, pork, potatoes, thy coal, thy
gold and silver,
The inexhaustible iron in thy mines.

All thine, O sacred Union!
Ships, farms, shops, barns, factories, mines,
City and State, North, South, item and aggregate,
We dedicate, dread Mother, all to thee!

Protectress absolute, thou! bulwark of all! 210
For well we know that while thou givest each and all, (gener-
ous as God,)
Without thee neither all nor each, nor land, home,
Nor ship, nor mine, nor any here this day secure,
Nor aught, nor any day secure.

9

And thou, the Emblem waving over all!
Delicate beauty, a word to thee, (it may be salutary,)
Remember thou hast not always been as here to-day so com-
fortably ensovereign'd,
In other scenes than these have I observ'd thee flag,
Not quite so trim and whole and freshly blooming in folds of
stainless silk,
But I have seen thee bunting, to tatters torn upon thy splin- 220
ter'd staff,

Or clutch'd to some young color-bearer's breast with desperate hands,
Savagely struggled for, for life or death, fought over long,
'Mid cannons' thunder-crash and many a curse and groan
and yell, and rifle-volleys cracking sharp,
And moving masses as wild demons surging, and lives as
nothing risk'd,
For thy mere remnant grimed with dirt and smoke and
sopp'd in blood,
For sake of that, my beauty, and that thou might'st dally as
now secure up there,
Many a good man have I seen go under.

Now here and these and hence in peace, all thine, O flag!
And here and hence for thee, O universal Muse! and thou for
them!
And here and hence O Union, all the work and workmen 230
thine!
None separate from thee—henceforth One only, we and thou,
(For the blood of the children, what is it, only the blood
maternal?
And lives and works, what are they all at last, except the
roads to faith and death?)

While we rehearse our measureless wealth, it is for thee, dear
Mother,
We own it all and several to-day indissoluble in thee;
Think not our chant, our show, merely for products gross or
lucre—it is for thee, the soul in thee, electric, spiritual!
Our farms, inventions, crops, we own in thee! cities and
States in thee!
Our freedom all in thee! our very lives in thee!

1871

1881

Song of the Redwood-Tree

I

A CALIFORNIA song,
A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to breathe
as air,
A chorus of dryads, fading, departing, or hamadryads de-
parting,
A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the earth and
sky,
Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest dense.

*Farewell my brethren,
Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighboring waters,
My time has ended, my term has come.*

Along the northern coast,
Just back from the rock-bound shore and the caves, 10
In the saline air from the sea in the Mendocino country,
With the surge for base and accompaniment low and hoarse,
With crackling blows of axes sounding musically driven by
strong arms,
Riven deep by the sharp tongues of the axes, there in the red-
wood forest dense,
I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting.

The choppers heard not, the camp shanties echoed not,
The quick-ear'd teamsters and chain and jack-screw¹ men
heard not,
As the wood-spirits came from their haunts of a thousand
years to join the refrain,
But in my soul I plainly heard.

Murmuring out of its myriad leaves, 20
Down from its lofty top rising two hundred feet high,
Out of its stalwart trunk and limbs, out of its foot-thick
bark,
That chant of the seasons and time, chant not of the past
only but the future.

*You untold life of me,
And all you venerable and innocent joys,*

¹ A screw-type jack for lifting.

*Perennial hardy life of me with joys 'mid rain and many a
summer sun,
And the white snows and night and the wild winds;
O the great patient rugged joys, my soul's strong joys unreck'd
by man,
(For know I bear the soul befitting me, I too have conscious-
ness, identity,
And all the rocks and mountains have, and all the earth,)
Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,
Our time, our term has come.*

30

*Nor yield we mournfully majestic brothers,
We who have grandly fill'd our time;
With Nature's calm content, with tacit huge delight,
We welcome what we wrought for through the past,
And leave the field for them.
For them predicted long,
For a superber race, they too to grandly fill their time,
For them we abdicate, in them ourselves ye forest kings!
In them these skies and airs, these mountain peaks, Shasta,
Nevadas,
These huge precipitous cliffs, this amplitude, these valleys, far
Yosemite,
To be in them absorb'd, assimilated.*

40

*Then to a loftier strain,
Still prouder, more ecstatic rose the chant,
As if the heirs, the deities of the West,
Joining with master-tongue bore part.*

*Not wan from Asia's fetiches,
Nor red from Europe's old dynastic slaughter-house,
(Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of wars and
scaffolds everywhere,)
But come from Nature's long and harmless throes, peacefully
builded thence,
These virgin lands, lands of the Western shore,
To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new,
You promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate.*

50

*You occult deep volitions,
You average spiritual manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on your-
self, giving not taking law,
You womanhood divine, mistress and source of all, whence life
and love and aught that comes from life and love,*

*You unseen moral essence of all the vast materials of America,
(age upon age working in death the same as life,)
You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really shape and
mould the New World, adjusting it to Time and Space,
You hidden national will lying in your abysms, conceal'd but 60
ever alert,
You past and present purposes tenaciously pursued, may-be
unconscious of yourselves,
Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations of the surface;
You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds, arts,
statutes, literatures,
Here build your homes for good, establish here, these areas
entire, lands of the Western shore,
We pledge, we dedicate to you.*

*For man of you, your characteristic race,
Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower propor-
tionate to Nature,
Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck'd by wall
or roof,
Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently inure,
Here heed himself, unfold himself, (not others' formulas heed,) 70
here fill his time,
To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,
To disappear, to serve,*

*Thus on the northern coast,
In the echo of teamsters' calls and the clinking chains, and
the music of choppers' axes,
The falling trunk and limbs, the crash, the muffled shriek,
the groan,
Such words combined from the redwood-tree, as of voices
ecstatic, ancient and rustling,
The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, withdrawing,
All their recesses of forests and mountains leaving,
From the Cascade range to the Wasatch, or Idaho far, or
Utah,
To the deities of the modern henceforth yielding, 80
The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming humanity,
the settlements, features all,
In the Mendocino woods I caught.*

*The flashing and golden pageant of California,
The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny and ample lands*

The long and varied stretch from Puget sound to Colorado
south,
Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air, valleys and
mountain cliffs,
The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow, the silent,
cyclic chemistry,
The slow and steady ages plodding, the unoccupied surface
ripening, the rich ores forming beneath;
At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession,
A swarming and busy race settling and organizing every- 90
where,
Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going out
to the whole world,
To India and China and Australia and the thousand island
paradises of the Pacific,
Populous cities, the latest inventions, the steamers on the
rivers, the railroads, with many a thrifty farm, with
machinery,
And wood and wheat and the grape, and diggings of yellow
gold.

3

But more in you than these, lands of the Western shore,
(These but the means, the implements, the standing-ground,)
I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands of
years, till now deferr'd,
Promis'd to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the race.

The new society at last, proportionate to Nature,
In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or stalwart 100
trees imperial.
In woman more, far more, than all your gold or vines, or
even vital air.

Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,
I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and ideal,
Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America,
heir of the past so grand,
To build a grander future.

1874

1881

A Song for Occupations

I

A SONG for occupations!

In the labor of engines and trades and the labor of fields I
find the developments,
And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen!

Were all educations practical and ornamental well display'd
out of me, what would it amount to?

Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise states-
man, what would it amount to?

Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would
that satisfy you?

The learn'd, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms,
A man like me and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master I,

I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will have
my own whoever enjoys me,

I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop I stand as nigh as the nighest
in the same shop,

If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend I de-
mand as good as your brother or dearest friend,

If your lover, husband, wife, is welcome by day or night, I
must be personally as welcome,

If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for
your sake,

If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do you
think I cannot remember my own foolish and outlaw'd
deeds?

If you carouse at the table I carouse at the opposite side of
the table,

If you meet some stranger in the streets and love him or her,
why I often meet strangers in the street and love them.

Why what have you thought of yourself?

Is it you then that thought yourself less?

Is it you that thought the President greater than you?

Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than
you?

10

20

(Because you are greasy or pimpled, or were once drunk, or a thief,
Or that you are diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute,
Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar
and never saw your name in print,
Do you give in that you are any less immortal?)

2

Souls of men and women! it is not you I call unseen, unheard, untouchable and untouching,
It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle whether you are alive or no,
I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns.

30

Grown, half-grown and babe, of this country and every country, indoors and out-doors, one just as much as the other, I see,
And all else behind or through them.

The wife, and she is not one jot less than the husband,
The daughter, and she is just as good as the son,
The mother, and she is every bit as much as the father.

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working on farms,

Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,
All these I see, but nigher and farther the same I see,
None shall escape me and none shall wish to escape me.

40

I bring what you much need yet always have,
Not money, amours, dress, eating, erudition, but as good,
I send no agent or medium,¹ offer no representative of value,
but offer the value itself.

There is something that comes to one now and perpetually,
It is not what is printed, preach'd, discussed, it eludes discussion and print,
It is not to be put in a book, it is not in this book,
It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther from you than your hearing and sight are from you,
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest, it is ever provoked by them.

¹ Intermediary.

You may read in many languages, yet read nothing about it,
You may read the President's message¹ and read nothing
about it there,
Nothing in the reports from the State department or 'Trea-
sury department, or in the daily papers or weekly papers,
Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or any
accounts of stock.

50

3

The sun and stars that float in the open air,
The apple-shaped earth and we upon it, surely the drift of
them is something grand,
I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and that it is
happiness,
And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation
or bon-mot or reconnoissance,
And that it is not something which by luck may turn out well
for us, and without luck must be a failure for us,
And not something which may yet be retracted in a certain
contingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and identity,
the greed that with perfect complaisance devours all
things,

The endless pride and outstretching of man, unspeakable
joys and sorrows,

60

The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees, and the
wonders that fill each minute of time forever,

What have you reckon'd them for, camerado?

Have you reckon'd them for your trade or farm-work? or for
the profits of your store?

Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's
leisure, or a lady's leisure?

Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance and
form that it might be painted in a picture?

Or men and women that they might be written of, and songs
sung?

Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and harmoni-
ous combinations and the fluids of the air, as subjects
for the savans?²

¹ Official communication sent to, or read before, the
Congress.

² A Whitman coinage for *savants*.

Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts?
Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy
names?
Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables, or
agriculture itself?

70

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, legends, collections, and
the practice handed along in manufactures, will we rate
them so high?

Will we rate our cash and business high? I have no objection,
I rate them as high as the highest—then a child born of a
woman and man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and our Constitution grand,
I do not say they are not grand and good, for they are,
I am this day just as much in love with them as you,
Then I am in love with You, and with all my fellows upon the
earth.

We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say they
are not divine,
I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of
you still,
It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life,
Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the
earth, than they are shed out of you.

80

4

The sum of all known reverence I add up in you whoever you
are,
The President is there in the White House for you, it is not
you who are here for him,
The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you, not you here for
them,
The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month for you,
Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters of cities, the
going and coming of commerce and mails, are all for
you.

List close my scholars dear,
Doctrines, politics and civilization exurge from you,
Sculpture and monuments and any thing inscribed anywhere
are tallied in you,
The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records
reach is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same,

90

If you were not breathing and walking here, where would
they all be?

The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and
plays would be vacuums.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it,
(Did you think it was in the white or gray stone? or the lines
of the arches and cornices?)

All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded
by the instruments,

It is not the violins and the cornets, it is not the oboe nor the
beating drums, nor the score of the baritone singer sing-
ing his sweet romanza, nor that of the men's chorus, nor
that of the women's chorus,

It is nearer and farther than they.

5

Will the whole come back then?

Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-glass?
is there nothing greater or more?

Does all sit there with you, with the mystic unseen soul? 100

Strange and hard that paradox true I give,
Objects gross and the unseen soul are one.

House-building, measuring, sawing the boards,
Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering, tin-
roofing, shingle-dressing,

Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, flagging of side-
walks by flaggers,

The pump, the pile-driver, the great derrick, the coal-kiln
and brick-kiln,

Coal-mines and all that is down there, the lamps in the dark-
ness, echoes, songs, what meditations, what vast native
thoughts looking through smutch'd faces,

Iron-works, forge-fires in the mountains or by river-banks,
men around feeling the melt with huge crowbars, lumps
of ore, the due combining of ore, limestone, coal,

The blast-furnace and the pudding-furnace, the loup-lump
at the bottom of the melt at last, the rolling-mill, the
stumpy bars of pig-iron, the strong, clean-shaped T-rail
for railroads,

Oil-works, silk-works, white-lead-works, the sugar-house, 110
steam-saws, the great mills and factories,

Stone-cutting, shapely trimmings for façades or window or
 door-lintels, the mallet, the tooth-chisel, the jib to pro-
 tect the thumb,
 The calking-iron, the kettle of boiling vault-cement, and the
 fire under the kettle,
 The cotton-bale, the stevedore's hook, the saw and buck
 of the sawyer, the mould of the moulder, the working-
 knife of the butcher, the ice-saw, and all the work
 with ice,
 The work and tools of the rigger, grappler, sail-maker, block-
 maker,
 Goods of gutta-percha, papier-maché, colors, brushes, brush-
 making, glazier's implements,
 The veneer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments, the
 decanter and glasses, the shears and flat-iron,
 The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart measure,
 the counter and stool, the writing-pen of quill or metal,
 the making of all sorts of edged tools,
 The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, everything that is
 done by brewers, wine-makers, vinegar-makers,
 Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-twist-
 ing, distilling, sign-painting, lime-burning, cotton-pick-
 ing, electroplating, electrotyping, stereotyping,
 Stave - machines, planing - machines, reaping - machines, 120
 ploughing-machines, thrashing-machines, steam wagons,
 The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray,
 Pyrotechny, letting off color'd fireworks at night, fancy
 figures and jets;
 Beef on the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the butcher,
 the butcher in his killing-clothes,
 The pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook, the
 scalding's tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the packer's
 maul, and the plenteous winterwork of pork-packing,
 Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice, the barrels
 and the half and quarter barrels, the loaded barges, the
 high piles on wharves and levees,¹
 The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroad,
 coasters, ash-boats, canals;
 The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the shop,
 yard, store, or factory,
 These shows all near you by day and night—workman! who-
 ever you are, your daily life!
 In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that and them
 far more than you estimated, (and far less also,)

¹ Quays.

In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you and me, 130
In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all things,
regardless of estimation,
In them the development good—in them all themes, hints,
possibilities.

I do not affirm that what you see beyond is futile, I do not
advise you to stop,
I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,
But I say that none lead to greater than these lead to.

6

Will you seek afar off? you surely come back at last,
In things best known to you finding the best, or as good as
the best,
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest,
lovingest,
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place,
not for another hour but this hour,
Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend, brother, 140
nighest neighbor—woman in mother, sister, wife,
The popular tastes and employments taking precedence in
poems or anywhere,
You workwomen and workmen of these States having your
own divine and strong life,
And all else giving place to men and women like you.

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver that
carved the supporting desk,
When I can touch the body of books by night or by day, and
when they touch my body back again,
When a university course convinces like a slumbering woman
and child convince,
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-
watchman's daughter,
When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are my 150
friendly companions,
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much of them
as I do of men and women like you.

*A Song of the Rolling Earth*¹

I

A SONG of the rolling earth, and of words according,
Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright
lines? those curves, angles, dots?

No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in the
ground and sea,

They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words, those delicious
sounds out of your friends' mouths?

No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,
(In the best poems re-appears the body, man's or woman's,
well-shaped, natural, gay,

Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or the need
of shame.)

Air, soil, water, fire—those are words,
I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate
with theirs—my name is nothing to them,

Though it were told in the three thousand languages, what
would air, soil, water, fire, know of my name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture, are
words, sayings, meanings,

The charms that go with the mere looks of some men and
women, are sayings and meanings also.

The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words of the
earth,

The masters know the earth's words and use them more than
audible words.

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,

The earth neither lags nor hastens,

It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself from the
jump,

It is not half beautiful only, defects and excrescences show
just as much as perfections show.

¹ An early title was *Carol of Words*.

The earth does not withhold, it is generous enough,
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not so conceal'd either,
They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print,
They are imbued through all things conveying themselves willingly,
Conveying a sentiment and invitation, I utter and utter,
I speak not, yet if you hear me not of what avail am I to you?
To bear, to better, lacking these of what avail am I?

(Accouche! accouchez! ¹
Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there?
Will you squat and stifle there?)

30

The earth does not argue,
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,
Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies, shuts none out.

The earth does not exhibit itself nor refuse to exhibit itself,
possesses still underneath,
Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus of
heroes, the wail of slaves,
Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying, laughter of
young people, accents of bargainers,
Underneath these possessing words that never fail.

40

To her children the words of the eloquent dumb great mother
never fail,
The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail and reflection does not fail,
Also the day and night do not fail, and the voyage we pursue
does not fail.

Of the interminable sisters,
Of the ceaseless cotillions of sisters,
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder and
younger sisters,
The beautiful sister we know ² dances on with the rest.

With her ample back towards every beholder,
With the fascinations of youth and the equal fascinations of age,

¹ It is difficult to account for the two forms of the word, but the meaning is clearly 'Deliver!'

² The earth.

Sits she whom I too love like the rest, sits undisturb'd, 50
Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror,
while her eyes glance back from it,
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her own face.

Seen at hand or seen at a distance,
Duly the twenty-four¹ appear in public every day,
Duly approach and pass with their companions or a com-
panion,
Looking from no countenances of their own, but from the
countenances of those who are with them,
From the countenances of children or women or the manly
countenance,
From the open countenances of animals or from inanimate
things,
From the landscape or waters or from the exquisite appari- 60
tion of the sky,
From our countenances, mine and yours, faithfully returning
them,
Every day in public appearing without fail, but never twice
with the same companions.

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three hundred
and sixty-five² resistlessly round the sun;
Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three
hundred and sixty-five offsets of the first, sure and neces-
sary as they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,
Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, forever withstanding, passing,
carrying,
The soul's realization and determination still inheriting,
The fluid vacuum around and ahead still entering and divid-
ing,
No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on no rock striking,
Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing losing, 70
Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,
The divine ship sails the divine sea.

2

Whoever you are! motion and reflection are especially for you,
The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

¹ The hours.

² The days of the year.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is
solid and liquid,
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the sky,
For none more than you are the present and the past,
For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself, is the word
of the past and present, and the true word of immortality;
No one can acquire for another—not one,
Not one can grow for another—not one.

80

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him,
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him,
The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most to him,
The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—it
cannot fail,
The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor and
actress not to the audience,
And no man understands any greatness or goodness but his
own, or the indication of his own.

3

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who
shall be complete,
The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who
remains jagged and broken.

90

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate
those of the earth,
There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate
the theory of the earth,
No politics, song, religion, behavior, or what not, is of
account, unless it compare with the amplitude of the
earth,
Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of
the earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than that
which responds love,
It is that which contains itself, which never invites and never
refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,
All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken mean-
ings of the earth.

Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the 100
truths of the earth,
Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print
cannot touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best,
It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot,
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,
I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow, all or any is
best,
It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper, easier, nearer,
Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before, 110
The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,
Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as real as
before,
But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

4

These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what were they
then?
If they had not reference to you in especial what were they
then?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith that
tells the best,
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best 120
untold.

Say on, sayers! sing on, singers!
Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth!
Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,
It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use,
When the materials are all prepared and ready. the architects
shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,

The greatest among them shall be he who best knows you,
and encloses all and is faithful to all,
He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive that
you are not an iota less than they,
You shall be fully glorified in them.

1856

1881

130

YOUTH, DAY, OLD AGE AND NIGHT

YOUTH, large, lusty, loving—youth full of grace, force,
fascination,
Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal
grace, force, fascination?

Day full-blown and splendid—day of the immense sun,
action, ambition, laughter,
The Night follows close with millions of suns, and sleep and
restoring darkness.

1881

1881

Birds of Passage

SONG OF THE UNIVERSAL

I

COME said the Muse,
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,
Sing me the universal.

In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection.

By every life a share or more or less,
None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd the seed
is waiting.

* H 573

191

Lo! keen-eyed towering science,
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking,
Successive absolute flats issuing.

10

Yet again, lo! the soul, above all science,
For it has history gather'd like husks around the globe,
For it the entire star-myriads roll through the sky.

In spiral routes by long detours,
(As a much-tacking ship upon the sea,)
For it the partial to the permanent flowing,
For it the real to the ideal tends.

For it the mystic evolution,
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also justified.
Forth from their masks, no matter what,
From the huge festering trunk, from craft and guile and tears,
Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.

20

Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,
Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds of men
and states,
Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,
Only the good is universal.

3

Over the mountain-growths disease and sorrow,
An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering,
High in the purer, happier air.

30

From imperfection's murkiest cloud,
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,
One flash of heaven's glory.

To fashion's, custom's discord,
To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,
Soothing each lull a strain is heard, just heard,
From some far shore the final chorus sounding.

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,
Along the mighty labyrinth.

40

And thou America,
For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its reality,
For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived.

Thou too surroundest all,
Embracing carrying welcoming all, thou too by pathways
broad and new,
To the ideal tendest.

The measur'd faiths of other lands, the grandeurs of the past,
Are not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own,
Deific faiths and amplitudes, absorbing, comprehending all, 50
All eligible to all.

All, all for immortality,
Love like the light silently wrapping all,
Nature's amelioration blessing all,
The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images
ripening.

Give me O God to sing that thought,
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith
In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not from
us,
Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space, 60
Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream?
Nay but the lack of it the dream,
And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,
And all the world a dream.

1874

1881

PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

COME my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of
danger,
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship, 10
Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the
foremost,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there be-
yond the seas?
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the
march,
Pioneers! O pioneers! 20

We detachments steady throwing,
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the un-
known ways,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the
mines within,
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the high 30
plateaus,
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail we
come,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the conti-
nental blood intervein'd,

All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all the
Northern,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless restless race!

O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender love
for all!

O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

40

Raise the mighty mother mistress,
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mistress,
(bend your heads all,)

Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive,
weapon'd mistress,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children, resolute children,
By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or falter,
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us
urging,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks,
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead
quickly fill'd,

Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never
stopping,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

50

O to die advancing on!

Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is
fill'd,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the world,
Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement beat,
Holding single or together, steady moving to the front, all
for us,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

60

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,
All the seamen and the landsmen, all the masters with their
slaves,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent lovers,
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the
wicked,
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and body,
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way, 70
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions
pressing,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Lo, the darting bowling orb!
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns and
planets,
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

These are of us, they are with us,
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in em-
bryo wait behind,
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel
clearing,
Pioneers! O pioneers! 80

O you daughters of the West!
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you
wives!
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Minstrels latent on the prairies!
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have done
your work,)
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp
amid us,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Not for delectations sweet,
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the 90
studious,
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoy-
ment,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd and bolted
doors?
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Has the night descended?
Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged
nodding on our way?
Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause obli-
vious,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

100

Till with sound of trumpet,
Far, far off the daybreak call—hark! how loud and clear I
hear it wind,
Swift! to the head of the army!—swift! spring to your places,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

1865

1881

TO YOU

WHOEVER you are, I fear you are walking the walks of dreams,
I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your
feet and hands,
Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade, manners,
troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from
you,
Your true soul and body appear before me,
They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops,
work, farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling, eating,
drinking, suffering, dying.

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you
be my poem,
I whisper with my lips close to your ear,
I have loved many women and men, but I love none better
than you.

O I have been dilatory and dumb,
I should have made my way straight to you long ago,
I should have blabb'd nothing but you, I should have chanted
nothing but you.

10

I will leave all and come and make the hymns of you,
None has understood you, but I understand you,
None has done justice to you, you have not done justice to
yourself,
None but has found you imperfect, I only find no imperfec-
tion in you,
None but would subordinate you, I only am he who will
never consent to subordinate you,
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better,
God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups and the centre-
figure of all,
From the head of the centre-figure spreading a nimbus of
gold-color'd light,
But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its
nimbus of gold-color'd light, 20
From my hand from the brain of every man and woman it
streams, effulgently flowing forever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you!
You have not known what you are, you have slumber'd upon
yourself all your life,
Your eyelids have been the same as closed most of the time,
What you have done returns already in mockeries,
(Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return in
mockeries, what is their return?)

The mockeries are not you,
Underneath them and within them I see you lurk,
I pursue you where none else has pursued you,
Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night, the 30
accustom'd routine, if these conceal you from others or
from yourself, they do not conceal you from me,
The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if
these balk others they do not balk me,
The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness, greed,
premature death, all these I part aside.

There is no endowment in man or woman that is not tallied
in you,
There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but as good
is in you,
No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you,
No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure waits
for you.

As for me, I give nothing to any one except I give the like
carefully to you,
I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner than I
sing the songs of the glory of you.

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard!
These shows of the East and West are tame compared to you,
These immense meadows, these interminable rivers, you are
immense and interminable as they,
These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes of
apparent dissolution, you are he or she who is master or
mistress over them,
Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, elements,
pain, passion, dissolution.

40

The hobbles fall from your ankles, you find an unfailing
sufficiency,
Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by the rest,
whatever you are promulges itself,
Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided,
nothing is scantied,
Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what you
are picks its way.

1856

1881

FRANCE

*The 18th Year of these States*¹

A GREAT year and place,
A harsh discordant natal scream out-sounding, to touch the
mother's heart closer than any yet.

I walk'd the shores of my Eastern sea,
Heard over the waves the little voice,
Saw the divine infant² where she woke mournfully wailing,
amid the roar of cannon, curses, shouts, crush of falling
buildings,
Was not so sick from the blood in the gutters running, nor
from the single corpses, nor those in heaps, nor those
borne away in the tumbrils,
Was not so desperate at the battues of death—was not so
shock'd at the repeated fusillades of the guns.

¹ 1794.

² The French Republic.

Pale, silent, stern, what could I say to that long-accrued re-tribution?

Could I wish humanity different?

Could I wish the people made of wood and stone?

Or that there be no justice in destiny or time?

O liberty! O mate for me!

Here too the blaze, the grape-shot and the axe, in reserve, to fetch them out in case of need,

Here too, though long repress, can never be destroy'd,

Here too could rise at last murdering and ecstatic,

Here too demanding full arrears of vengeance.

Hence I sign this salute over the sea,

And I do not deny that terrible red birth and baptism,

But remember the little voice that I heard wailing, and wait with perfect trust, no matter how long,

And from to-day sad and cogent I maintain the bequeath'd cause, as for all lands,

And I send these words to Paris with my love,

And I guess some chansonniers there will understand them,

For I guess there is latent music yet in France, floods of it,

O I hear already the bustle of instruments, they will soon be drowning all that would interrupt them,

O I think the east wind brings a triumphal and free march,

It reaches hither, it swells me to joyful madness,

I will run transpose it in words, to justify it,

I will yet sing a song for you ma femme.

1860

1871

MYSELF AND MINE

MYSELF and mine gymnastic ever,

To stand the cold or heat, to make good aim with a gun, to sail a boat, to manage horses, to beget superb children,

To speak readily and clearly, to feel at home among common people,

And to hold our own in terrible positions on land and sea.

Not for an embroiderer,

(There will always be plenty of embroiderers, I welcome them also,)

But for the fibre of things and for inherent men and women.

Not to chisel ornaments,
But to chisel with free stroke the heads and limbs of plenteous supreme Gods, that the States may realize them walking and talking.

Let me have my own way,
Let others promulge the laws, I will make no account of the laws,
Let others praise eminent men and hold up peace, I hold up agitation and conflict,
I praise no eminent man, I rebuke to his face the one that was thought most worthy.

(Who are you? and what are you secretly guilty of all your life?
Will you turn aside all your life? will you grub and chatter all your life?
And who are you, blabbing by rote, years, pages, languages, reminiscences,
Unwitting to-day that you do not know how to speak properly a single word?)

Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does, fresh and modern continually.

I give nothing as duties,
What others give as duties I give as living impulses,
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

Let others dispose of questions, I dispose of nothing, I arouse unanswerable questions,
Who are they I see and touch, and what about them?
What about these likes of myself that draw me so close by tender directions and indirections?

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends, but listen to my enemies, as I myself do,
I charge you forever reject those who would expound me, for I cannot expound myself,
I charge that there be no theory or school founded out of me,
I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.

After me, vista!
O I see life is not short, but immeasurably long,

I henceforth tread the world chaste, temperate, an early
riser, a steady grower,
Every hour the semen of centuries, and still of centuries.

I must follow up these continual lessons of the air, water,
earth,
I perceive I have no time to lose.

1860

1881

YEAR OF METEORS

(1859-60)

YEAR of meteors! brooding year!

I would bind in words retrospective some of your deeds and
signs,

I would sing your contest for the 19th Presidentiad,¹

I would sing how an old man, tall, with white hair, mounted
the scaffold in Virginia,

(I was at hand, silent I stood with teeth shut close, I watch'd,
I stood very near you old man when cool and indifferent, but
trembling with age and your unheal'd wounds, you
mounted the scaffold;) ²

I would sing in my copious song your census returns of the
States,

The tables of population and products, I would sing of your
ships and their cargoes,

The proud black ships of Manhattan arriving, some fill'd with
immigrants, some from the isthmus³ with cargoes of
gold,

Songs thereof would I sing, to all that hitherward comes 10
would I welcome give,

And you would I sing, fair stripling! welcome to you from
me, young prince of England!⁴

(Remember you surging Manhattan's crowds as you pass'd
with your cortege of nobles?

There in the crowds stood I, and singled you out with
attachment;)

¹ A Whitman coinage to designate the presidential term of
office (four years).

² Execution of John Brown.

³ Isthmus of Panama, over which California gold was
transhipped.

⁴ The Prince of Wales.

Nor forget I to sing of the wonder, the ship as she swam up
 my bay,
 Well-shaped and stately the Great Eastern¹ swam up my bay,
 she was 600 feet long,
 Her moving swiftly surrounded by myriads of small craft I
 forget not to sing;
 Nor the comet that came unannounced out of the north
 flaring in heaven,
 Nor the strange huge meteor-procession dazzling and clear
 shooting over our heads,
 (A moment, a moment long it sail'd its balls of unearthly
 light over our heads,
 Then departed, dropt in the night, and was gone;) 20
 Of such, and fitful as they, I sing—with gleams from them
 would I gleam and patch these chants,
 Your chants, O year all mottled with evil and good—year of
 forebodings!
 Year of comets and meteors transient and strange—lo! even
 here one equally transient and strange!
 As I flit through you hastily, soon to fall and be gone, what
 is this chant,
 What am I myself but one of your meteors?

1860?

1881

WITH ANTECEDENTS

I

WITH antecedents,
 With my fathers and mothers and the accumulations of past
 ages,
 10 With all which, had it not been, I would not now be here, as
 I am,
 With Egypt, India, Phenicia, Greece and Rome,
 With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb and the Saxon,
 With antique maritime ventures, laws, artisanship, wars and
 journeys,
 With the poet, the skald, the saga, the myth, and the oracle,
 With the sale of slaves, with enthusiasts, with the troubadour,
 the crusader, and the monk,
 With those old continents whence we have come to this new
 continent,
 With the fading kingdoms and kings over there, 10

¹ She laid the Atlantic cables in 1865, 1866.

With the fading religions and priests,
With the small shores we look back to from our own large
and present shores,
With countless years drawing themselves onward and arrived
at these years,
You and me arrived—America arrived and making this year,
This year! sending itself ahead countless years to come.

2

O but it is not the years—it is I, it is You,
We touch all laws and tally all antecedents,
We are the skald, the oracle, the monk and the knight, we
easily include them and more,
We stand amid time beginningless and endless, we stand
amid evil and good,
All swings around us, there is as much darkness as light, 20
The very sun swings itself and its system of planets around
us,
Its sun, and its again, all swing around us.

As for me, (torn, stormy, amid these vehement days,)
I have the idea of all, and am all and believe in all,
I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true, I reject
no part.

(Have I forgotten any part? any thing in the past?
Come to me whoever and whatever, till I give you recogni-
tion.)

I respect Assyria, China, Teutonia, and the Hebrews,
I adopt each theory, myth, god, and demi-god,
I see that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies, are true, 30
without exception,
I assert that all past days were what they must have been,
And that they could no-how have been better than they were,
And that to-day is what it must be, and that America is,
And that to-day and America could no-how be better than
they are.

3

In the name of these States and in your and my name, the
Past,
And in the name of these States and in your and my name,
the Present time.

I know that the past was great and the future will be great,
And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present time,
(For the sake of him I typify, for the common average man's
sake, your sake if you are he,)
And that where I am or you are this present day, there is the 40
centre of all days, all races,
And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of
races and days, or ever will come.

1860

1881

A Broadway Pageant

I

OVER the Western sea hither from Nippon¹ come,
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, im-
passive,
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

Libertad! I do not know whether others behold what I be-
hold,
In the procession along with the nobles of Nippon, the
errand-bearers,
Bringing up the rear, hovering above, around, or in the ranks
marching,
But I will sing you a song of what I behold Libertad.

When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to her
pavements,
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud 10
roar I love,
When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and smell I
love spit their salutes,
When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and heaven
clouds canopy my city with a delicate thin haze,
When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests at
the wharves, thicken with colors,
When every ship richly drest carries her flag at the peak,

¹ Nippon. The occasion was the arrival of the Japanese Embassy, June 1860.

When pennants trail and street-festoons hang from the
windows,
When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers and
foot-standers, when the mass is densest,
When the façades of the houses are alive with people, when
eyes gaze riveted tens of thousands at a time,
When the guests from the islands advance, when the pageant
moves forward visible,
When the summons is made, when the answer that waited
thousands of years answers,
I too arising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge 20
with the crowd, and gaze with them.

2

Superb-faced Manhattan!
Comrade Americanos! to us, then at last the Orient comes.

To us, my city,
Where our tall-topt marble and iron beauties range on
opposite sides, to walk in the space between,
To-day our Antipodes comes.

The Originatress comes,
The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race of
eld,
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with
passion,
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,
With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering eyes, 30
The race of Brahma comes.

See my cantabile! these and more are flashing to us from the
procession,
As it moves changing, a kaleidoscope divine it moves chang-
ing before us.

For not the envoys nor the tann'd Japanee from his island
only,
Lithe and silent the Hindoo appears, the Asiatic continent
itself appears, the past, the dead,
The murky night-morning of wonder and fable inscrutable,
The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-bees,
The north, the sweltering south, eastern Assyria, the He-
brews, the ancient of ancients,

Vast desolated cities, the gliding present, all of these and more are in the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it, 40
The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia, the coast beyond,
The coast you henceforth are facing—you, Libertad! from your Western golden shores,
The countries there with their populations, the millions en-masse are curiously here,
The swarming market-places, the temples with idols ranged along the sides or at the end, bonze, brahmin, and llama, Mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman,
The singing-girl and the dancing-girl, the ecstatic persons, the secluded emperors,
Confucius himself, the great poets and heroes, the warriors, the castes, all,
Trooping up, crowding from all directions, from the Altay mountains,
From Thibet, from the four winding and far-flowing rivers of China,
From the southern peninsulas and the demi-continental islands, from Malaysia, 50
These and whatever belongs to them palpable show forth to me, and are seiz'd by me,
And I am seiz'd by them, and friendlily held by them,
Till as here them all I chant, Libertad! for themselves and for you.

For I too raising my voice join the ranks of this pageant,
I am the chanter, I chant aloud over the pageant,
I chant the world on my Western sea,
I chant copious the islands beyond, thick as stars in the sky,
I chant the new empire grander than any before, as in a vision it comes to me,
I chant America the mistress, I chant a greater supremacy, 60
I chant projected a thousand blooming cities yet in time on those groups of sea-islands,
My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archipelagoes,
My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,
Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its work, races reborn, refresh'd,
Lives, works resumed—the object I know not—but the old, the Asiatic renew'd as it must be,
Commencing from this day surrounded by the world.

And you Libertad of the world!
 You shall sit in the middle well-pois'd thousands and thou-
 sands of years,
 As to-day from one side the nobles of Asia come to you,
 As to-morrow from the other side the queen of England sends
 her eldest son to you.

The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed,
 The ring is circled, the journey is done,
 The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd, nevertheless the per-
 fume pours copiously out of the whole box.

70

Young Libertad! with the venerable Asia, the all-mother,
 Be considerate with her now and ever hot Libertad, for you
 are all,
 Bend your proud neck to the long-off¹ mother now sending
 messages over the archipelagoes to you,
 Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

Were the children straying westward so long? so wide the
 tramping?
 Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward from
 Paradise so long?
 Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all the while
 unknown, for you, for reasons?

They are justified, they are accomplish'd, they shall now be
 turn'd the other way also, to travel toward you thence,
 They shall now also march obediently eastward for your
 sake Libertad.

80

1860?

1881

¹ Far-off.

Sea-Drift

OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING

OUT of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's¹ throat, the musical shuttle,
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child
 leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as
 if they were alive,
Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and
 fallings I heard,
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as
 if with tears, 10
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the
 mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter, 20
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass
 was growing,
Up this seashore in some briars,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with
 bright eyes,

¹ An American songster with mimetic powers.

And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never dis- 30
turb- ing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.

40

Till of a sudden,
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird, 50
The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,
Down almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know. 60

Yes my brother I know,
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the
shadows,

Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds
and sights after their sorts,
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
Following you my brother.

70

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one
close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.

Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.

O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love.

O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the
breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?

80

Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my love.

Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.

Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate
back again if you only would,
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.

90

O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of
you.

*O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.*

*Shake out carols!
Solitary here, the night's carols!
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea!
O reckless despairing carols.*

100

*But soft! sink low!
Soft! let me just murmur,
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,
But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately
to me.*

110

*Hither my love!
Here I am! here!
With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,
Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowful.*

120

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart!
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

*O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields,
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more.*

*The aria sinking,
All else continuing, the stars shining,
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,*

130

With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,
On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the
face of the sea almost touching,
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair
the atmosphere dallying,
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last
tumultuously bursting,
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering, 140
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd
secret hissing.
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have
heard you,
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer,
louder and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me,
never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me, 150
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating
you,
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before
what there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,) 160
The word final, superior to all,
Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea
waves?
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before
daybreak,
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
And again death, death, death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd 170
child's heart,
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly
all over,
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray
beach,
With the thousand responsive songs at random,
My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song and all songs, 180
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet
garments, bending aside,)
The sea whisper'd me.

1859

1881

AS I EBB'D WITH THE OCEAN OF LIFE

I

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life,
As I wended the shores I know,
As I walk'd where the ripples continually wash you Paumanok,
Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant,
Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her castaways,
I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,
Held by this electric self out of the pride of which I utter
poems,
Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,
The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and all the
land of the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to 10
follow those slender windrows,
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,

Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left by
the tide,
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side of
me,
Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought of
likenesses,
These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,
As I wended the shores I know,
As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types.

2

As I wend to the shores I know not,
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me, 20
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,
I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon
me I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet
touch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs
and bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have 30
written,
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand be-
neath.
I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a
single object, and that no man ever can,
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to dart
upon me and sting me,
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

3

You oceans both, I close with you,
We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift,
knowing not why,
These little shreds indeed standing for you and me and all.

You friable shore with trails of debris,
You fish-shaped island, I take what is underfoot,
What is yours is mine my father.

40

I too Paumanok,
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and
 been wash'd on your shores,
I too am but a trail of drift and debris,
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island.

I throw myself upon your breast my father,
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,
I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me my father,
Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,
Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the mur- 50
 muring I envy.

4

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)
Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,
Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny not me,
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I touch
 you or gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,
I gather for myself and for this phantom ¹ looking down where
 we lead, and following me and mine.

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,
(See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,
See, the prismatic colors glistening and rolling,) 60
Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,
Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another,
From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,
Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid or
 soil,
Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and
 thrown,

¹ Apparently the Muse. Compare *By Blue Ontario's Shore*, p. 283.

A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves float-
 ing, drifted at random,
 Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,
 Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-trum-
 pets,
 We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence, spread
 out before you,
 You up there¹ walking or sitting,
 Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.

1860

1881

70

TEARS

TEARS! tears! tears!
 In the night, in solitude, tears,
 On the white shore dripping, dripping, suck'd in by the sand,
 Tears, not a star shining, all dark and desolate,
 Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head;
 O who is that ghost? that form in the dark, with tears?
 What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouch'd there on the
 sand?
 Streaming tears, sobbing tears, throes, choked with wild
 cries;
 O storm, embodied, rising, careering with swift steps along
 the beach!
 O wild and dismal night storm, with wind—O belching and
 desperate!
 O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm counten-
 ance and regulated pace,
 But away at night as you fly, none looking—O then the un-
 loosen'd ocean,
 Of tears! tears! tears!

1867

1871

10

TO THE MAN-OF-WAR-BIRD

THOU who hast slept all night upon the storm,
 Waking renew'd on thy prodigious pinions,
 (Burst the wild storm? above it thou ascended'st,
 And rested on the sky, thy slave that cradled thee,)
 Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating,
 As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,
 (Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating vast.)

¹ The reader.

Far, far at sea,
After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the shore with
wrecks,
With re-appearing day as now so happy and serene,
The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,
The limpid spread of air cerulean,
Thou also re-appearest.

10

Thou born to match the gale, (thou art all wings,)
To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurricane,
Thou ship of air that never furl'st thy sails,
Days, even weeks untired and onward, through spaces,
realms gyrating,
At dusk that look'st on Senegal, at morn America,
That sport'st amid the lightning-flash and thunder-cloud,
In them, in thy experiences, had'st thou my soul,
What joys! what joys were thine!

20

1876

1881

ABOARD AT A SHIP'S HELM

ABOARD at a ship's helm,
A young steersman steering with care.

Through fog on a sea-coast dolefully ringing,
An ocean-bell—O a warning bell, rock'd by the waves.

O you give good notice indeed, you bell by the sea-reefs
ringing,
Ringing, ringing, to warn the ship from its wreck-place.

For as on the alert O steersman, you mind the loud admoni-
tion,
The bows turn, the freighted ship tacking speeds away under
her gray sails,
The beautiful and noble ship with all her precious wealth
speeds away gayly and safe.

But O the ship, the immortal ship! O ship aboard the ship!
Ship of the body, ship of the soul, voyaging, voyaging,
voyaging.

10

1867

1871

ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT

ON the beach at night,
Stands a child with her father,
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses
 spreading,
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

10

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,
Those burial clouds that lower victorious soon to devour all,
Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not, child,
Weep not, my darling,
With these kisses let me remove your tears,
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars
 only in apparition,
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another night,
 the Pleiades shall emerge,
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden
 shall shine out again, 20
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again, they
 endure,
The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive moons
 shall again shine.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter?
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,
I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and indirection,)
Something there is more immortal even than the stars,
(Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing away,) 30
Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous
 Jupiter,
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

THE WORLD BELOW THE BRINE

THE world below the brine,
Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,
Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds, the thick
tangle, openings, and pink turf,
Different colors, pale gray and green, purple, white, and gold,
the play of light through the water,
Dumb swimmers there among the rocks, coral, gluten, grass,
rushes, and the aliment of the swimmers,
Sluggish existences grazing there suspended, or slowly crawl-
ing close to the bottom,
The sperm-whale at the surface blowing air and spray, or
disporting with his flukes,
The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy sea-
leopard, and the sting-ray,
Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those ocean-
depths, breathing that thick-breathing air, as so many
do,
The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air 10
breathed by beings like us who walk this sphere,
The change onward from ours to that of beings who walk
other spheres.

1860

1871

ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT ALONE

ON the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky
song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the
clef of the universes and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons,
planets,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or
in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes,
the brutes,
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages, 10

All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or
any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose
them.

1856

1881

SONG FOR ALL SEAS, ALL SHIPS

I

TO-DAY a rude brief recitative,
Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag or ship-
signal,
Of unnamed heroes in the ships—of waves spreading and
spreading far as the eye can reach,
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,
And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations,
Fitful, like a surge.

Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of all in-
trepid sailors,

Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never sur-
prise nor death dismay,

Pick'd sparingly without noise by thee old ocean, chosen by
thee,

Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time, and unitest
nations, 10

Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,

Indomitable, untamed as thee.

(Ever the heroes on water or on land, by ones or twos
appearing,

Ever the stock preserv'd and never lost, though rare, enough
for seed preserv'd.)

2

Flaunt out O sea your separate flags of nations!

Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-signals!

But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the soul of
man one flag above all the rest,

A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man elate
above death,

Token of all brave captains and all intrepid sailors and mates,
And all that went down doing their duty,
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains
 young or old,
A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er all brave
 sailors,
All seas, all ships.

1873

1881

PATROLING BARNEGAT¹

WILD, wild the storm, and the sea high running,
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant undertone mutter-
 ing,
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully piercing and pealing,
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing,
Out in the shadows there milk-white combs careering,
On beachy slush and sand spirts of snow fierce slanting,
Where through the murk the easterly death-wind breasting,
Through cutting swirl and spray watchful and firm advanc-
 ing,
(That in the distance! is that a wreck? is the red signal
 flaring?)
Slush and sand of the beach tireless till daylight wending,
Steadily, slowly, through hoarse roar never remitting,
Along the midnight edge by those milk-white combs career-
 ing,
A group of dim, weird forms, struggling, the night con-
 fronting,
That savage trinity warily watching.

1880

1881

AFTER THE SEA-SHIP

AFTER the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,
After the white-gray sails taut to their spars and ropes,
Below, a myriad myriad waves hastening, lifting up their
 necks,
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship,
Waves of the ocean bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,

¹ Barnegat Shoals, off the New Jersey coast.

Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven, emulous waves,
 Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant, with
 curves,
 Where the great vessel sailing and tacking displaced the
 surface,
 Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the ocean yearn-
 fully flowing,
 The wake of the sea-ship after she passes, flashing and frolic- 10
 some under the sun,
 A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and many
 fragments,
 Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake following.
 1874 1881

By the Roadside

A BOSTON BALLAD

(1854)

To get betimes in Boston town I rose this morning early,¹
 Here 's a good place at the corner, I must stand and see the
 show.

Clear the way there Jonathan!²
 Way for the President's marshal—way for the government
 cannon!
 Way for the Federal foot and dragoons, (and the apparitions
 copiously tumbling.)

I love to look on the Stars and Stripes, I hope the fifes will
 play Yankee Doodle.³

How bright shine the cutlasses of the foremost troops!
 Every man holds his revolver, marching stiff through Boston
 town.

¹ 24th May 1854, when Anthony Burns, an escaped slave, was returned to his master under the Fugitive Slave Law.

² Used both as the American counterpart of John Bull, and also for the individual American, particularly one from the New England states.

³ Revolutionary war song.

A fog follows, antiques of the same come limping,
Some appear wooden-legged, and some appear bandaged 10
and bloodless.

Why this is indeed a show—it has called the dead out of the
earth!

The old graveyards of the hills have hurried to see!
Phantoms! phantoms countless by flank and rear!
Cock'd hats of mothy mould—crutches made of mist!
Arms in slings—old men leaning on young men's shoulders.

What troubles you Yankee phantoms? what is all this chat-
tering of bare gums?
Does the ague convulse your limbs? do you mistake your
crutches for firelocks and level them?

If you blind your eyes with tears you will not see the Presi-
dent's marshal,
If you groan such groans you might balk the government
cannon.

For shame old maniacs—bring down those toss'd arms, and 20
let your white hair be,
Here gape your great-grandsons, their wives gaze at them
from the windows,
See how well dress'd, see how orderly they conduct them-
selves.

Worse and worse—can't you stand it? are you retreating?
Is this hour with the living too dead for you?

Retreat then—pell-mell!
To your graves—back—back to the hills old limpers!
I do not think you belong here anyhow.

But there is one thing that belongs here—shall I tell you what
it is, gentlemen of Boston?

I will whisper it to the Mayor, he shall send a committee to
England,
They shall get a grant from the Parliament, go with a cart to 30
the royal vault,
Dig out King George's coffin, unwrap him quick from the
grave-clothes, box up his bones for a journey,

Find a swift Yankee clipper—here is freight for you, black-
bellied clipper,
Up with your anchor—shake out your sails—steer straight
toward Boston bay.

Now call for the President's marshal again, bring out the
government cannon,
Fetch home the roarers¹ from Congress, make another pro-
cession, guard it with foot and dragoons.

This centre-piece for them;
Look, all orderly citizens—look from the windows, women!

The committee open the box, set up the regal ribs, glue those
that will not stay,
Clap the skull on top of the ribs, and clap a crown on top of
the skull.

You have got your revenge, old buster²—the crown is come to
its own, and more than its own. 40

Stick your hands in your pockets, Jonathan—you are a made
man from this day,
You are mighty cute³—and here is one of your bargains.

1854?

1871

EUROPE

*The 72d and 73d Years of These States*⁴

SUDDENLY out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves,
Like lightning it le'pt forth half startled at itself,
Its feet upon the ashes and the rags, its hand tight to the
throats of kings.

O hope and faith!
O aching close of exiled patriots' lives!
O many a sicken'd heart!
Turn back unto this day and make yourselves afresh.

¹ Loud-mouthed politicians.

² American slang for something remarkable; also for a
roisterer.

³ Acute, clever.

⁴ Years of revolution in Europe. Original title, *Resurgemus*.

And you, paid to defile the People—you liars, mark!
Not for numberless agonies, murders, lusts,
For court thieving in its manifold mean forms, worming 10
from his simplicity the poor man's wages,
For many a promise sworn by royal lips and broken and
laugh'd at in the breaking,
Then in their power not for all these did the blows strike
revenge, or the heads of the nobles fall;
The People scorn'd the ferocity of kings.

But the sweetness of mercy brew'd bitter destruction, and the
frighten'd monarchs come back,
Each comes in state with his train, hangman, priest, tax-
gatherer,
Soldier, lawyer, lord, jailer, and sycophant.

Yet behind all lowering stealing, lo, a shape,
Vague as the night, draped interminably, head, front and
form, in scarlet folds,
Whose face and eyes none may see,
Out of its robes only this, the red robes lifted by the arm, 20
One finger crook'd pointed high over the top, like the head of
a snake appears.

Meanwhile corpses lie in new-made graves, bloody corpses of
young men,
The rope of the gibbet hangs heavily, the bullets of princes
are flying, the creatures of power laugh aloud,
And all these things bear fruits, and they are good.

Those corpses of young men,
Those martyrs that hang from the gibbets, those hearts
pierc'd by the gray lead,
Cold and motionless as they seem live elsewhere with un-
slaughter'd vitality.

They live in other young men O kings!
They live in brothers again ready to defy you,
They were purified by death, they were taught and exalted. 30

Not a grave of the murder'd for freedom but grows seed for
freedom, in its turn to bear seed,
Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and the
snows nourish.

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let loose,
But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering, counseling,
cautioning.

Liberty, let others despair of you—I never despair of you.

Is the house shut? is the master away?
Nevertheless, be ready, be not weary of watching,
He will soon return, his messengers come anon.

1850

1860

A HAND-MIRROR

HOLD it up sternly—see this it sends back, (who is it? is it
you?)

Outside fair costume, within ashes and filth,
No more a flashing eye, no more a sonorous voice or springy
step,

Now some slave's eye, voice, hands, step,
A drunkard's breath, unwholesome eater's face, venerealee's¹
flesh,

Lungs rotting away piecemeal, stomach sour and cankerous,
Joints rheumatic, bowels clogged with abomination,
Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams,

Words babble, hearing and touch callous,
No brain, no heart left, no magnetism of sex;

Such from one look in this looking-glass ere you go hence,
Such a result so soon—and from such a beginning!

10

1860

1860

GODS

LOVER divine and perfect Comrade,
Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,
Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,
Complete in body and dilate in spirit,
Be thou my God.

O Death, (for Life has served its turn,)
Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion,
Be thou my God.

10

¹ A Whitman coinage for a victim of venereal disease.

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or know,
(To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O soul,)
Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,
Be ye my Gods.

Or Time and Space,
Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,
Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,
Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,
Be ye my Gods.

1870

1881

20

GERMS

FORMS, qualities, lives, humanity, language, thoughts,
The ones known, and the ones unknown, the ones on the stars,
The stars themselves, some shaped, others unshaped,
Wonders as of those countries, the soil, trees, cities, inhabi-
tants, whatever they may be,
Splendid suns, the moons and rings, the countless combina-
tions and effects,
Such-like, and as good as such-like, visible here or anywhere,
stand provided for in a handful of space, which I extend
my arm and half enclose with my hand,
That containing the start of each and all, the virtue, the
germs of all.

1860

1871

THOUGHTS

Of ownership—as if one fit to own things could not at
pleasure enter upon all, and incorporate them into him-
self or herself;
Of vista—suppose some sight in arriere through the forma-
tive chaos, presuming the growth, fulness, life, now
attain'd on the journey,
(But I see the road continued, and the journey ever con-
tinued;)
Of what was once lacking on earth, and in due time has be-
come supplied—and of what will yet be supplied,
Because all I see and know I believe to have its main purport
in what will yet be supplied.

1860

1881

WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before
me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide,
and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with
much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

1865

1867

PERFECTIONS

ONLY themselves understand themselves and the like of
themselves,
As souls only understand souls.

1860

1860

O ME! O LIFE!

O ME! O life! of the questions of these recurring,
Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd with the
foolish,
Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish
than I, and who more faithless?)
Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects mean, of the
struggle ever renew'd,
Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and sordid crowds
I see around me,
Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the rest me
intertwined,
The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid
these, O me, O life?

Answer

That you are here—that life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a
verse.

1865-6

1867

TO A PRESIDENT

ALL you are doing and saying is to America dangled mirages,
You have not learn'd of Nature—of the politics of Nature
you have not learn'd the great amplitude, rectitude,
impartiality,
You have not seen that only such as they are for these States,
And that what is less than they must sooner or later lift off
from these States.

1860

1860

I SIT AND LOOK OUT

I SIT and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and
upon all oppression and shame,
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish
with themselves, remorseful after deeds done,
I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying,
neglected, gaunt, desperate,
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacherous
seducer of young women,
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love at-
tempted to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see martyrs
and prisoners,
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots
who shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant per-
sons upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the
like;
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting
look out upon,
See, hear, and am silent.

1860

1860

10

TO RICH GIVERS

WHAT you give me I cheerfully accept,
A little sustenance, a hut and garden, a little money, as I
rendezvous with my poems,
A traveler's lodging and breakfast as I journey through the
States,—why should I be ashamed to own such gifts?
why to advertise for them?

For I myself am not one who bestows nothing upon man and
woman,
For I bestow upon any man or woman the entrance to all the
gifts of the universe.

1860

1867

THE DALLIANCE OF THE EAGLES

SKIRTING the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest,)
Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the
eagles,
The rushing amorous contact high in space together,
The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating
wheel,
Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grap-
pling,
In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward
falling,
Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's lull,
A motionless still balance in the air, then parting, talons
loosing,
Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their separate
diverse flight,
She hers, he his, pursuing.

10

1880

1881

ROAMING IN THOUGHT

(After reading HEGEL)

ROAMING in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that is
Good steadily hastening towards immortality,
And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to merge
itself and become lost and dead.

1881

1881

A FARM PICTURE

THROUGH the ample open door of the peaceful country barn,
A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding,
And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away.

1865

1871

A CHILD'S AMAZE

SILENT and amazed even when a little boy,
I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God in
his statements,
As contending against some being or influence.

1865

1867

THE RUNNER

ON a flat road runs the well-train'd runner,
He is lean and sinewy with muscular legs,
He is thinly clothed, he leans forward as he runs,
With lightly closed fists and arms partially rais'd.

1867

1867

BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

WOMEN sit or move to and fro, some old, some young,
The young are beautiful—but the old are more beautiful than
the young.

1860

1860

MOTHER AND BABE

I SEE the sleeping babe nestling the breast of its mother,
The sleeping mother and babe—hush'd, I study them long
and long.

1865

1867

THOUGHT

OF obedience, faith, adhesiveness;
As I stand aloof and look there is to me something profoundly
affecting in large masses of men following the lead of
those who do not believe in men.

1860

1860

VISOR'D

A MASK, a perpetual natural disguiser of herself,
Concealing her face, concealing her form,
Changes and transformations every hour, every moment,
Falling upon her even when she sleeps.

1860

1867

THOUGHT

OF Justice—as if Justice could be any thing but the same
ample law, expounded by natural judges and saviors,
As if it might be this thing or that thing, according to de-
cisions.

1860

1860

GLIDING O'ER ALL

GLIDING o'er all, through all,
Through Nature, Time, and Space,
As a ship on the waters advancing,
The voyage of the soul—not life alone,
Death, many deaths I 'll sing.

1871

1871

HAST NEVER COME TO THEE AN HOUR

HAST never come to thee an hour,
A sudden gleam divine, precipitating, bursting all these
bubbles, fashions, wealth?
These eager business aims—books, politics, art, amours,
To utter nothingness?

1881

1881

THOUGHT

OF Equality—as if it harm'd me, giving others the same
chances and rights as myself—as if it were not indis-
pensable to my own rights that others possess the same.

1860

1860

TO OLD AGE

I SEE in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads itself
grandly as it pours in the great sea.

1860

1860

LOCATIONS AND TIMES

LOCATIONS and times—what is it in me that meets them all,
whenever and wherever, and makes me at home?
Forms, colors, densities, odors—what is it in me that cor-
responds with them?

1860

1871

OFFERINGS

A THOUSAND perfect men and women appear,
Around each gathers a cluster of friends, and gay children
and youths, with offerings.

1860

1871

TO THE STATES

To Identify the 16th, 17th, or 18th Presidentiad¹

WHY reclining, interrogating? why myself and all drowsing?
What deepening twilight—scum floating atop of the waters,
Who are they as bats and night-dogs askant in the capitol?
What a filthy Presidentiad! (O South, your torrid suns! O
North, your arctic freezings!)
Are those really Congressmen? are those the great Judges? is
that the President?
Then I will sleep awhile yet, for I see that these States sleep,
for reasons;
(With gathering murk, with muttering thunder and lambent
shoots we all duly awake,
South, North, East, West, inland and seaboard, we will surely
awake.)

1860

1860

Drum-Taps

FIRST O SONGS FOR A PRELUDE

FIRST O songs for a prelude,
Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum² pride and joy in
my city,
How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue,
How at once with lithe limbs unwaiting a moment she sprang,
(O superb! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless!
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis! O truer than
steel!)

¹ The terms of office of Presidents Fillmore, Pierce, and Buchanan.

² Probably here used for drum-heads.

How you sprang—how you threw off the costumes of peace
with indifferent hand,
How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and fife
were heard in their stead,
How you led to the war, (that shall serve for our prelude,
songs of soldiers,)
How Manhattan drum-taps led.

10

Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers parading,¹
Forty years as a pageant, till unawares the lady of this teem-
ing and turbulent city,
Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her incalculable wealth,
With her million children around her, suddenly,
At dead of night, at news from the south,
Incens'd struck with clinch'd hand the pavement.

A shock electric, the night sustain'd it,
Till with ominous hum our hive at daybreak pour'd out its
myriads.

From the houses then and the workshops, and through all
the doorways,
Leapt they tumultuous, and lo! Manhattan arming.

20

To the drum-taps prompt,
The young men falling in and arming,
The mechanics arming, (the trowel, the jack-plane, the black-
smith's hammer, tost aside with precipitation,)
The lawyer leaving his office and arming, the judge leaving
the court,
The driver deserting his wagon in the street, jumping down,
throwing the reins abruptly down on the horses' backs,
The salesman leaving the store, the boss, book-keeper, porter,
all leaving;
Squads gather everywhere by common consent and arm,
The new recruits, even boys, the old men show them how to
wear their accoutrements, they buckle the straps care-
fully,
Outdoors, arming, indoors arming, the flash of the musket-
barrels,
The white tents cluster in camps, the arm'd sentries around,
the sunrise cannon and again at sunset,
Arm'd regiments arrive every day, pass through the city, and
embark from the wharves,

30

¹ At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 Whitman was almost forty-two.

(How good they look as they tramp down to the river, sweaty,
with their guns on their shoulders!

How I love them! how I could hug them, with their brown
faces and their clothes and knapsacks cover'd with
dust!)

The blood of the city up—arm'd! arm'd! the cry everywhere,
The flags flung out from the steeples of churches and from all
the public buildings and stores,¹

The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son kisses
his mother,

(Loth is the mother to part, yet not a word does she speak to
detain him,)

The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen preceding,
clearing the way,

The unpent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the crowd for
their favorites,

The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold, drawn along,
rumble lightly over the stones,

40

(Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,
Soon unlimber'd to begin the red business;)

All the mutter of preparation, all the determin'd arming,

The hospital service, the lint, bandages and medicines,

The women volunteering for nurses, the work begun for in
earnest, no mere parade now;

War! an arm'd race is advancing! the welcome for battle, no
turning away;

War! be it weeks, months, or years, an arm'd race is advanc-
ing to welcome it.

Mannahatta a-march—and it's O to sing it well!

It's O for a manly life in the camp.

And the sturdy artillery,

50

The guns bright as gold, the work for giants, to serve well the
guns,

Unlimber them! (no more as the past forty years for salute or
courtesies merely,

Put in something now besides powder and wadding.)

And you lady of ships, you Mannahatta,

Old matron of this proud, friendly, turbulent city,

Often in peace and wealth you were pensive or covertly
frown'd amid all your children,

But now you smile with joy exulting old Mannahatta.

1865

1867

¹ Shops.

EIGHTEEN SIXTY-ONE

ARM'D year—year of the struggle,
No dainty rhymes or sentimental love verses for you terrible
year,
Not you as some pale poetling seated at a desk lisping
cadenzas piano,
But as a strong man erect, clothed in blue clothes, advancing,
carrying a rifle on your shoulder,
With well-gristled body and sunburnt face and hands, with a
knife in the belt at your side,
As I heard you shouting loud, your sonorous voice ringing
across the continent,
Your masculine voice O year, as rising amid the great cities,
Amid the men of Manhattan I saw you as one of the work-
men, the dwellers in Manhattan,
Or with large steps crossing the prairies out of Illinois and
Indiana,
Rapidly crossing the West with springy gait and descending 10
the Alleghanies,
Or down from the great lakes or in Pennsylvania, or on deck
along the Ohio river,
Or southward along the Tennessee or Cumberland rivers, or
at Chattanooga on the mountain top,
Saw I your gait and saw I your sinewy limbs clothed in blue,
bearing weapons, robust year,
Heard your determin'd voice launch'd forth again and again,
Year that suddenly sang by the mouths of the round-lipp'd
cannon,
I repeat you, hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted year.
1861? 1867

BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!¹

BEAT! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless
force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying;
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have
now with his bride,

¹ Published in a newspaper after the Union defeat at Bull Run, 21st July 1861.

Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or
gathering his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you
bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the
streets;
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no 10
sleepers must sleep in those beds,
No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers ¹ or speculators
—would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to
sing?
Would the lawyer ² rise in the court to state his case before the
judge?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties, 20
Make even the trestles ³ to shake the dead where they lie
awaiting the hearses,
So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles
blow.

1861

1867

FROM PAUMANOK STARTING I FLY LIKE A BIRD

FROM Paumanok starting I fly like a bird,
Around and around to soar to sing the idea of all,
To the north betaking myself to sing there arctic songs,
To Kanada till I absorb Kanada in myself, to Michigan then,
To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs, (they
are inimitable;)
Then to Ohio and Indiana to sing theirs, to Missouri and
Kansas and Arkansas to sing theirs,
To Tennessee and Kentucky, to the Carolinas and Georgia
to sing theirs,

¹ Stockbrokers.

² Barrister.

³ Coffin supports.

To Texas and so along up toward California, to roam
accepted everywhere;
To sing first, (to the tap of the war-drum if need be,)
The idea of all, of the Western world one and inseparable,
And then the song of each member of these States.

1865

1867

SONG OF THE BANNER AT DAYBREAK

Poet

O A new song, a free song,
Flapping, flapping, flapping, flapping, by sounds, by voices
clearer,
By the wind's voice and that of the drum,
By the banner's voice and child's voice and sea's voice and
father's voice,
Low on the ground and high in the air,
On the ground where father and child stand,
In the upward air where their eyes turn,
Where the banner at daybreak is flapping.

Words! book-words! what are you?
Words no more, for hearken and see,
My song is there in the open air, and I must sing,
With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

I 'll weave the chord and twine in,
Man's desire and babe's desire, I 'll twine them in, I 'll put in
life,
I 'll put the bayonet's flashing point, I 'll let bullets and slugs
whizz,
(As one carrying a symbol and menace far into the future,
Crying with trumpet voice, *Arouse and beware! Beware and
arouse!*)
I 'll pour the verse with streams of blood, full of volition, full
of joy,
Then loosen, launch forth, to go and compete,
With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

Pennant

Come up here, bard, bard,
Come up here, soul, soul,
Come up here, dear little child,
To fly in the clouds and winds with me, and play with the
measureless light.

Child

Father what is that in the sky beckoning to me with long
finger?
And what does it say to me all the while?

Father

Nothing my babe you see in the sky,
And nothing at all to you it says—but look you my babe,
Look at these dazzling things in the houses, and see you the
money-shops opening,
And see you the vehicles preparing to crawl along the streets 30
with goods;
These, ah these, how valued and toil'd for these!
How envied by all the earth!

Poet

Fresh and rosy red the sun is mounting high,
On floats the sea in distant blue careering through its channels,
On floats the wind over the breast of the sea setting in toward
land,
The great steady wind from west or west-by-south,
Floating so buoyant with milk-white foam on the waters.

But I am not the sea nor the red sun,
I am not the wind with girlish laughter,
Not the immense wind which strengthens, not the wind 40
which lashes,
Not the spirit that ever lashes its own body to terror and
death,
But I am that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings,
Which babbles in brooks and scoots in showers on the land,
Which the birds know in the woods mornings and evenings,
And the shore-sands know and the hissing wave, and that
banner and pennant,
Aloft there flapping and flapping.

Child

O father it is alive—it is full of people—it has children,
O now it seems to me it is talking to its children,
I hear it—it talks to me—O it is wonderful!
O it stretches—it spreads and runs so fast—O my father, 50
It is so broad it covers the whole sky.

Father

Cease, cease, my foolish babe,
What you are saying is sorrowful to me, much it displeases
me;
Behold with the rest again I say, behold not banners and
pennants aloft,
But the well-prepared pavements behold, and mark the solid-
wall'd houses.

Banner and Pennant

Speak to the child O bard out of Manhattan,
To our children all, or north or south of Manhattan,
Point this day, leaving all the rest, to us over all—and yet we
know not why,
For what are we, mere strips of cloth profiting nothing,
Only flapping in the wind?

60

Poet

I hear and see not strips of cloth alone,
I hear the tramp of armies, I hear the challenging sentry,
I hear the jubilant shouts of millions of men, I hear Liberty!
I hear the drums beat and the trumpets blowing,
I myself move abroad swift-rising flying then,
I use the wings of the land-bird and use the wings of the sea-
bird, and look down as from a height,
I do not deny the precious results of peace, I see populous
cities with wealth incalculable,
I see numberless farms, I see the farmers working in their
fields or barns,
I see mechanics working, I see buildings everywhere founded,
going up, or finish'd,
I see trains of cars swiftly speeding along railroad tracks
drawn by the locomotives,
I see the stores, depots, of Boston, Baltimore, Charleston,
New Orleans,
I see far in the West the immense area of grain, I dwell awhile
hovering,
I pass to the lumber forests of the North, and again to the
Southern plantation, and again to California;
Sweeping the whole I see the countless profit, the busy
gatherings, earn'd wages,
See the Identity formed out of thirty-eight spacious and
haughty States, (and many more to come,)
See forts on the shores of harbors, see ships sailing in and
out;

70

Then over all, (aye! aye!) my little and lengthen'd pennant
shaped like a sword,
Runs swiftly up indicating war and defiance—and now the
halyards have rais'd it,
Side of my banner broad and blue, side of my starry banner,
Discarding peace over all the sea and land.

80

Banner and Pennant

Yet louder, higher, stronger, bard! yet farther, wider cleave!
No longer let our children deem us riches and peace alone,
We may be terror and carnage, and are so now,
Not now are we any one of these spacious and haughty
States, (nor any five, nor ten,)
Nor market nor depot we, nor money-bank in the city,
But these and all, and the brown and spreading land, and the
mines below, are ours,
And the shores of the sea are ours, and the rivers great and
small,
And the fields they moisten, and the crops and the fruits are
ours,
Bays and channels and ships sailing in and out are ours—
while we over all,
Over the area spread below, the three or four millions of
square miles, the capitals,
The forty millions of people,—O bard! in life and death
supreme,
We, even we, henceforth flaunt out masterful, high up above,
Not for the present alone, for a thousand years chanting
through you,
This song to the soul of one poor little child.

90

Child

O my father I like not the houses,
They will never to me be anything, nor do I like money,
But to mount up there I would like, O father dear, that
banner I like,
That pennant I would be and must be.

Father

Child of mine you fill me with anguish,
To be that pennant would be too fearful,
Little you know what it is this day, and after this day, forever,
It is to gain nothing, but risk and defy everything,

100

Forward to stand in front of wars—and O, such wars!—
what have you to do with them?
With passions of demons, slaughter, premature death?

Banner

Demons and death then I sing,
Put in all, aye all will I, sword-shaped pennant for war,
And a pleasure new and ecstatic, and the prattled yearning of
children,
Blent with the sounds of the peaceful land and the liquid
wash of the sea,
And the black ships fighting on the sea envelop'd in smoke,
And the icy cool of the far, far north, with rustling cedars 110
and pines,
And the whirr of drums and the sound of soldiers marching,
and the hot sun shining south,
And the beach-waves combing over the beach on my Eastern
shore, and my Western shore the same,
And all between those shores, and my ever running Missis-
sippi with bends and chutes,
And my Illinois fields, and my Kansas fields, and my fields of
Missouri,
The Continent, devoting the whole identity without reserving
an atom,
Pour in! whelm that which asks, which sings, with all and the
yield of all,
Fusing and holding, claiming, devouring the whole,
No more with tender lip, nor musical labial sound,
But out of the night emerging for good, our voice persuasive
no more,
Croaking like crows here in the wind. 120

Poet

My limbs, my veins dilate, my theme is clear at last,
Banner so broad advancing out of the night, I sing you
haughty and resolute,
I burst through where I waited long, too long, deafen'd and
blinded,
My hearing and tongue are come to me, (a little child taught
me,)
I hear from above O pennant of war your ironical call and
demand,
Insensate! insensate (yet I at any rate chant you,) O banner!
Not houses of peace indeed are you, nor any nor all their

prosperity, (if need be, you shall again have every one of
 those houses to destroy them,
 You thought not to destroy those valuable houses, standing
 fast, full of comfort, built with money,
 May they stand fast, then? not an hour except you above
 them and all stand fast;)

O banner, not money so precious are you, not farm produce 130
 you, nor the material good nutriment,
 Nor excellent stores, nor landed on wharves from the ships,
 Not the superb ships with sail-power or steam-power, fetch-
 ing and carrying cargoes,
 Nor machinery, vehicles, trade, nor revenues—but you as
 henceforth I see you,
 Running up out of the night, bringing your cluster of stars,
 (ever-enlarging stars,)

Divider of daybreak you, cutting the air, touch'd by the sun,
 measuring the sky,
 (Passionately seen and yearn'd for by one poor little child,
 While others remain busy or smartly talking, forever teach-
 ing thrift, thrift;)

O you up there! O pennant! where you undulate like a snake
 hissing so curious,
 Out of reach, an idea only, yet furiously fought for, risking
 bloody death, loved by me,
 So loved—O you banner leading the day with stars brought 140
 from the night!

Valueless, object of eyes, over all and demanding all—(ab-
 solute owner of all)—O banner and pennant!
 I too leave the rest—great as it is, it is nothing—houses,
 machines are nothing—I see them not,
 I see but you, O warlike pennant! O banner so broad, with
 stripes, I sing you only,
 Flapping up there in the wind.

1861-2?

1881

RISE O DAYS FROM YOUR FATHOMLESS DEEPS

I

RISE O days from your fathomless deeps, till you loftier,
 fiercer sweep,
 Long for my soul hungering gymnastic I devour'd what the
 earth gave me,
 Long I roam'd the woods of the north, long I watch'd Nia-
 gara pouring,

I travel'd the prairies over and slept on their breast, I cross'd
 the Nevadas,¹ I cross'd the plateaus,
 I ascended the towering rocks along the Pacific, I sail'd out
 to sea,
 I sail'd through the storm, I was refresh'd by the storm,
 I watch'd with joy the threatening maws of the waves,
 I mark'd the white combs where they career'd so high, curling
 over,
 I heard the wind piping, I saw the black clouds,
 Saw from below what arose and mounted, (O superb! O 10
 wild as my heart, and powerful!)
 Heard the continuous thunder as it bellow'd after the light-
 ning,
 Noted the slender and jagged threads of lightning as sudden
 and fast amid the din they chased each other across the
 sky;
 These, and such as these, I, elate, saw—saw with wonder, yet
 pensive and masterful,
 All the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me,
 Yet there with my soul I fed, I fed content, supercilious.

2

'Twas well, O soul—'twas a good preparation you gave me,
 Now we advance our latent and ampler hunger to fill,
 Now we go forth to receive what the earth and the sea never
 gave us,
 Not through the mighty woods we go, but through the
 mightier cities,
 Something for us is pouring now more than Niagara pouring, 20
 Torrents of men, (sources and rills of the Northwest are you
 indeed inexhaustible?)
 What, to pavements and homesteads here, what were those
 storms of the mountains and sea?
 What, to passions I witness around me to-day? was the sea
 risen?
 Was the wind piping the pipe of death under the black clouds?
 Lo! from deeps more unfathomable, something more deadly
 and savage,
 Manhattan rising, advancing with menacing front—Cincin-
 nati, Chicago, unchain'd;
 What was that swell I saw on the ocean? behold what comes
 here,
 How it climbs with daring feet and hands—how it dashes!

¹ Presumably the mountains in Nevada (Rockies).

How the true thunder bellows after the lightning—how
bright the flashes of lightning!
How Democracy with desperate vengeful port strides on,
shown through the dark by those flashes of lightning!
(Yet a mournful wail and low sob I fancied I heard through
the dark,
In a lull of the deafening confusion.)

3

Thunder on! stride on, Democracy! strike with vengeful
stroke!

And do you rise higher than ever yet O days, O cities!
Crash heavier, heavier yet O storms! you have done me good,
My soul prepared in the mountains absorbs your immortal
strong nutriment,

Long had I walk'd my cities, my country roads through
farms, only half satisfied,

One doubt nauseous undulating like a snake, crawl'd on the
ground before me,

Continually preceding my steps, turning upon me oft, ironi-
cally hissing low;

The cities I love so well I abandon'd and left, I sped to the
certainties suitable to me,

Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal energies and
Nature's dauntlessness,

I refresh'd myself with it only, I could relish it only,
I waited the bursting forth of the pent fire—on the water and
air I waited long;

But now I no longer wait, I am fully satisfied, I am gluttoned,
I have witness'd the true lightning, I have witness'd my cities
electric,

I have lived to behold man burst forth and warlike America
rise,

Hence I will seek no more the food of the northern solitary
wilds,

No more the mountains roam or sail the stormy sea.

1865

1867

VIRGINIA—THE WEST

THE noble sire¹ fallen on evil days,
I saw with hand uplifted, menacing, brandishing,
(Memories of old in abeyance, love and faith in abeyance,)
The insane knife toward the Mother of All.

¹ Virginia, 'Mother of Presidents.'

The noble son on sinewy feet advancing,
I saw, out of the land of prairies, land of Ohio's waters and
Indiana,
To the rescue the stalwart giant hurry his plenteous off-
spring.¹
Drest in blue, bearing their trusty rifles on their shoulders.

Then the Mother of All² with calm voice speaking,
As to you Rebellious,³ (I seemed to hear her say,) why strive 10
against me, and why seek my life?
When you yourself forever provide to defend me?
For you provided me Washington⁴—and now these also.

1872

1881

CITY OF SHIPS

CITY of Ships! ⁵
(O the black ships! O the fierce ships!
O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steam-ships and sail-ships!)
City of the world! (for all races are here,
All the lands of the earth make contributions here;)
City of the sea! city of hurried and glittering tides!
City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede, whirling
in and out with eddies and foam!
City of wharves and stores—city of tall façades of marble and
iron!
Proud and passionate city—mettlesome, mad, extravagant
city!
Spring up O city—not for peace alone, but be indeed your- 10
self, warlike!
Fear not—submit to no models but your own O city!
Behold me—incarnate me as I have incarnated you!
I have rejected nothing you offer'd me—whom you adopted
I have adopted,
Good or bad I never question you—I love all—I do not con-
demn anything,
I chant and celebrate all that is yours—yet peace no more,
In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of war is mine,
War, red war is my song through your streets, O city!

1865

1867

¹ Union volunteers from the West.

² The Union.

³ Virginia, which seceded from the Union.

⁴ George Washington, a native of Virginia.

⁵ New York.

THE CENTENARIAN'S STORY

Volunteer of 1861-2, (at Washington Park, Brooklyn, assisting the Centenarian)

GIVE me your hand old Revolutionary,
The hill-top is nigh, but a few steps, (make room gentlemen,
Up the path you have follow'd me well, spite of your hundred
and extra years,
You can walk old man, though your eyes are almost done,
Your faculties serve you, and presently I must have them
serve me.

Rest, while I tell what the crowd around us means,
On the plain below recruits are drilling and exercising,
There is the camp, one regiment departs to-morrow,
Do you hear the officers giving their orders?
Do you hear the clank of the muskets?

10

Why what comes over you now old man?
Why do you tremble and clutch my hand so convulsively?
The troops are but drilling, they are yet surrounded with
smiles,
Around them at hand the well-drest friends and the women,
While splendid and warm the afternoon sun shines down,
Green the midsummer verdure and fresh blows the dallying
breeze,
O'er proud and peaceful cities and arm of the sea between.

But drill and parade are over, they march back to quarters,
Only hear that approval of hands! hear what a clapping!

As wending the crowds now part and disperse—but we old man, 20
Not for nothing have I brought you hither—we must remain,
You to speak in your turn, and I to listen and tell.¹

The Centenarian

When I clutch'd your hand it was not with terror,
But suddenly pouring about me here on every side,
And below there where the boys were drilling, and up the
slopes they ran,

¹ Lieutenant Whitman, the poet's great uncle, died in this battle.

And where tents are pitch'd, and wherever you see south and
south-east and south-west,
Over hills, across lowlands and in the skirts of woods,
And along the shores in mire (now fill'd over) came again
and suddenly raged,
As eighty-five years a-gone no mere parade receiv'd with
applause of friends,
But a battle which I took part in myself—aye, long ago as it 30
is, I took part in it,
Walking then this hilltop, this same ground.¹

Aye, this is the ground,
My blind eyes even as I speak behold it re-peopled from
graves,
The years recede, pavements and stately houses disappear,
Rude forts appear again, the old hoop'd guns are mounted,
I see the lines of rais'd earth stretching from river to bay,
I mark the vista of waters, I mark the uplands and slopes;
Here we lay encamp'd, it was this time in summer also.

As I talk I remember all, I remember the Declaration,²
It was read here, the whole army paraded, it was read to us 40
here,
By his staff surrounded the General³ stood in the middle, he
held up his unsheath'd sword,
It glitter'd in the sun in full sight of the army.

'Twas a bold act then—the English war-ships had just
arrived,
We could watch down the lower bay where they lay at anchor,
And the transports swarming with soldiers.

A few days more and they landed and then the battle.

Twenty thousand were brought against us,
A veteran force furnish'd with good artillery.

I tell not now the whole of the battle,
But one brigade early in the forenoon order'd forward to 50
engage the red-coats,⁴

¹ Whitman, as editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, had urged that this battlefield be made a public park, which it now is.

² Declaration of Independence.

³ Washington.

⁴ Colloquial name given to the British soldier.

Of that brigade I tell, and how steadily it march'd,
And how long and well it stood confronting death.

Who do you think that was marching steadily sternly con-
fronting death?

It was the brigade of the youngest men, two thousand strong,
Rais'd in Virginia and Maryland, and most of them known
personally to the General.

Jauntily forward they went with quick step toward Gowanus'
waters,¹

Till of a sudden unlook'd for by defiles through the woods,
gain'd at night,

The British advancing, rounding in from the east, fiercely
playing their guns,

That brigade of the youngest was cut off and at the enemy's
mercy.

The General watch'd them from this hill,

They made repeated desperate attempts to burst their en-
vironment,

Then drew close together, very compact, their flag flying in
the middle,

But O from the hills how the cannon were thinning and thin-
ning them!

It sickens me yet, that slaughter!

I saw the moisture gather in drops on the face of the General.
I saw how he wrung his hands in anguish.

Meanwhile the British manœuvr'd to draw us out for a
pitch'd battle,

But we dared not trust the chances of a pitch'd battle.

We fought the fight in detachments,

Sallying forth we fought at several points, but in each the
luck was against us,

Our foe advancing, steadily getting the best of it, push'd us
back to the works on this hill,

Till we turn'd menacing here, and then he left us.

That was the going out of the brigade of the youngest men,
two thousand strong,

Few return'd, nearly all remain in Brooklyn.

¹ Inlet of New York Bay.

That and here my General's first battle,
No women looking on nor sunshine to bask in, it did not
conclude with applause,
Nobody clapp'd hands here then.

But in darkness in mist on the ground under a chill rain,
Wearied that night we lay foil'd and sullen,
While scornfully laugh'd many an arrogant lord off against 80
us encamp'd,
Quite within hearing, feasting, clinking wineglasses together
over their victory.

So dull and damp and another day,
But the night of that, mist lifting, rain ceasing,
Silent as a ghost while they thought they were sure of him,
my General retreated.

I saw him at the river-side,
Down by the ferry lit by torches, hastening the embarkation;
My General waited till the soldiers and wounded were all
pass'd over,
And then, (it was just ere sunrise,) these eyes rested on him
for the last time.

Every one else seem'd fill'd with gloom,
Many no doubt thought of capitulation. 90

But when my General pass'd me,
As he stood in his boat and look'd toward the coming sun,
I saw something different from capitulation.

Terminus

Enough, the Centenarian's story ends,
The two, the past and present, have interchanged,
I myself as connector, a chansonnier of a great future, am
now speaking.

And is this the ground Washington trod?
And these waters I listlessly daily cross, are these the waters
he cross'd,
As resolute in defeat as other generals in their proudest
triumphs?

I must copy the story, and send it eastward and westward, 100
I must preserve that look as it beam'd on you rivers of
Brooklyn.

See—as the annual round returns the phantoms return,
 It is the 27th of August and the British have landed,
 The battle begins and goes against us, behold through the
 smoke Washington's face,
 The brigade of Virginia and Maryland have march'd forth to
 intercept the enemy,
 They are cut off, murderous artillery from the hills plays
 upon them,
 Rank after rank falls, while over them silently droops the
 flag,
 Baptized that day in many a young man's bloody wounds,
 In death, defeat, and sisters', mothers' tears.

Ah, hills and slopes of Brooklyn! I perceive you are more 110
 valuable than your owners supposed;
 In the midst of you stands an encampment very old,
 Stands forever the camp of that dead brigade.

1861-2?

1881

CAVALRY CROSSING A FORD

A LINE in long array where they wind betwixt green islands,
 They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun—
 hark to the musical clank,
 Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses loitering
 stop to drink,
 Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each person a
 picture, the negligent rest on the saddles,
 Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just entering
 the ford—while,
 Scarlet and blue and snowy white,
 The guidon flags flutter gayly in the wind.

1865

1871

BIVOUAC ON A MOUNTAIN SIDE

I SEE before me now a traveling army halting,
 Below a fertile valley spread, with barns and the orchards of
 summer,
 Behind, the terraced sides of a mountain, abrupt, in places
 rising high,
 Broken, with rocks, with clinging cedars, with tall shapes
 dingily seen,

The numerous camp-fires scatter'd near and far, some away
up on the mountain,
The shadowy forms of men and horses, looming, large-sized,
flickering,
And over all the sky—the sky! far, far out of reach, studded,
breaking out, the eternal stars.

1865

1871

AN ARMY CORPS ON THE MARCH

WITH its cloud of skirmishers in advance,
With now the sound of a single shot snapping like a whip,
and now an irregular volley,
The swarming ranks press on and on, the dense brigades
press on,
Glittering dimly, toiling under the sun—the dust-cover'd
men,
In columns rise and fall to the undulations of the ground,
With artillery interspers'd—the wheels rumble, the horses
sweat,
As the army corps advances.

1865-6

1871

BY THE BIVOUAC'S FITFUL FLAME

By the bivouac's fitful flame,
A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and slow
—but first I note,
The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and woods' dim
outline,
The darkness lit by spots of kindled fire, the silence,
Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving,
The shrubs and trees, (as I lift my eyes they seem to be
stealthily watching me,)
While wind in procession thoughts, O tender and wondrous
thoughts,
Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, and of
those that are far away;
A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the ground,
By the bivouac's fitful flame.

1865

1867

10

COME UP FROM THE FIELDS FATHER

COME up from the fields father, here 's a letter from our Pete,
And come to the front door mother, here 's a letter from thy
dear son.

Lo, 'tis autumn,
Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,
Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering in the
moderate wind,
Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on the
trellis'd vines,
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?
Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were lately buzzing?)

Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the rain,
and with wondrous clouds,
Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the farm 10
prosper well.

Down in the fields all prospers well,
But now from the fields come father, come at the daughter's
call,
And come to the entry mother, to the front door come right
away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous, her steps
trembling,
She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,
O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O stricken mother's
soul!

All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches the
main words only,
Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry skir-* 20
mish, taken to hospital,
At present low, but will soon be better.

Ah now the single figure to me,
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all its cities and
farms,
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,
By the jamb of a door leans.

*Grieve not so, dear mother, (the just-grown daughter speaks
through her sobs,
The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd,)
See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.*

Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may-be needs to
be better, that brave and simple soul,)
While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,
The only son is dead.

30

But the mother needs to be better,
She with thin form presently drest in black,
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully sleeping,
often waking,
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep
longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life escape
and withdraw,
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

1865

1867

VIGIL STRANGE I KEPT ON THE FIELD ONE NIGHT

VIGIL strange I kept on the field one night;
When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side that day,
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a
look I shall never forget,
One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as you
lay on the ground,
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested battle,
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again I made
my way,
Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body
son of responding kisses, (never again on earth re-
sponding,)
Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool blew
the moderate night-wind,
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the
battlefield spreading,
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent
night,
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long, long I
gazed,

10

* K 573

Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side leaning
my chin in my hands,
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you
dearest comrade—not a tear, not a word,
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you my son and my
soldier,
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward
stole,
Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift was
your death,
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we
shall surely meet again,)
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the dawn
appear'd,
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his form,
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and
carefully under feet,
And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son in
his grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,
Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and battle-
field dim,
Vigil for boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth
responding,)
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how as
day brighten'd,
I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in his
blanket,
And buried him where he fell.

1865

1867

A MARCH IN THE RANKS HARD-PREST, AND THE ROAD UNKNOWN

A MARCH in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown,
A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the
darkness,
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant
retreating,
Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-
lighted building,
We come to an open space in the woods, and halt by the
dim-lighted building,
'Tis a large old church at the crossing roads, now an im-
promptu hospital,

Entering but for a minute I see a sight beyond all the pictures
 and poems ever made,
 Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving candles
 and lamps,
 And by one great pitchy torch stationary with wild red flame
 and clouds of smoke,
 By these, crowds, groups of forms vaguely I see on the floor, 10
 some in the pews laid down,
 At my feet more distinctly a soldier, a mere lad, in danger of
 bleeding to death, (he is shot in the abdomen,)
 I stanch the blood temporarily, (the youngster's face is white
 as a lily,)
 Then before I depart I sweep my eyes o'er the scene fain to
 absorb it all,
 Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in ob-
 scurity, some of them dead,
 Surgeons operating, attendants holding lights, the smell of
 ether, the odor of blood,
 The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms, the yard out-
 side also fill'd,
 Some on the bare ground, some on planks or stretchers,
 some in the death-spasm sweating,
 An occasional scream or cry, the doctor's shouted orders or
 calls,
 The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint of
 the torches,
 These I resume as I chant, I see again the forms, I smell the 20
 odor,
 Then hear outside the orders given, *Fall in, my men, fall in;*
 But first I bend to the dying lad, his eyes open, a half-smile
 gives he me,
 Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth to the
 darkness,
 Resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on in the
 ranks,
 The unknown road still marching.

1865

1867

A SIGHT IN CAMP IN THE DAYBREAK GRAY AND DIM

A SIGHT in camp in the daybreak gray and dim,
 As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,
 As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the
 hospital tent,

Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there un-
tended lying,
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woolen
blanket,
Gray and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.

Curious I halt and silent stand,
Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest the first
just lift the blanket;
Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim, with well-
gray'd hair, and flesh all sunken about the eyes?
Who are you my dear comrade?

10

Then to the second I step—and who are you my child and
darling?
Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?

Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very calm, as of
beautiful yellow-white ivory;
Young man I think I know you—I think this face is the face
of the Christ himself,
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.

1865

1867

AS TOILSOME I WANDER'D VIRGINIA'S WOODS

As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,
To the music of rustling leaves kick'd by my feet, (for 'twas
autumn,)
I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of a soldier;
Mortally wounded he and buried on the retreat, (easily all
could I understand,)
The halt of a mid-day hour, when up! no time to lose—yet
this sign left,
On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree by the grave,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

Long, long I muse, then on my way go wandering,
Many a changeful season to follow, and many a scene of life,
Yet at times through changeful season and scene, abrupt,
alone, or in the crowded street,
Comes before me the unknown soldier's grave, comes the
inscription rude in Virginia's woods,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

10

1865

1867

NOT THE PILOT

Not the pilot has charged himself to bring his ship into port,
though beaten back and many times baffled;
Not the pathfinder penetrating inland weary and long,
By deserts parch'd, snows chill'd, rivers wet, perseveres till he
reaches his destination,
More than I have charged myself, heeded or unheeded, to
compose a march for these States,
For a battle-call, rousing to arms if need be, years, centuries
hence.

1860

1881

YEAR THAT TREMBLED AND REEL'D BENEATH ME

YEAR that trembled and reel'd beneath me!
Your summer wind was warm enough, yet the air I breathed
froze me,
A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and darken'd me,
Must I change my triumphant songs? said I to myself,
Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges of the baffled?
And sullen hymns of defeat?

1865

1867

THE WOUND-DRESSER

I

AN old man bending I come among new faces,
Years looking backward resuming in answer to children,
Come tell us old man, as from young men and maidens that
love me,
(Arous'd and angry, I 'd thought to beat the alarum, and urge
relentless war,
But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and I re-
sign'd myself,
To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the
dead;)
Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions, these
chances,
Of unsurpass'd heroes, (was one side so brave? the other was
equally brave;)
Now be witness again, paint the mightiest armies of earth,

Of those armies so rapid so wondrous what saw you to tell us? 10
What stays with you latest and deepest? of curious panics,
Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous what
deepest remains?

2

O maidens and young men I love and that love me,
What you ask of my days those the strangest and sudden
your talking recalls,
Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with sweat
and dust,
In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly shout
in the rush of successful charge,
Enter the captur'd works—yet lo, like a swift running river
they fade,
Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not on soldiers' perils
or soldiers' joys,
(Both I remember well—many of the hardships, few the joys,
yet I was content.)

But in silence, in dreams' projections, 20
While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints
off the sand,
With hinged knees returning I enter the doors, (while for you
up there,
Whoever you are, follow without noise and be of strong
heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought in,
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass the ground,
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the roof'd
hospital,
To the long rows of cots up and down each side I return, 30
To each and all one after another I draw near, not one do I
miss,
An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries a refuse pail,
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied, and
fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoidable,

One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy! I never knew
you,
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for you, if
that would save you.

3

On, on I go, (open doors of time! open hospital doors!)
The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed hand tear not the
bandage away,) 40
The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through and
through I examine,
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye, yet
life struggles hard,
(Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death!
In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the mat-
ter and blood,
Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd neck and
side falling head, 20
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look on the
bloody stump,
And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep, 50
But a day or two more, for see the frame all wasted and
sinking,
And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet-
wound,
Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so
sickening, so offensive,
While the attendant stands behind aside me holding the tray
and pail. 30

I am faithful, I do not give out,
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,
These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in my
breast a fire, a burning flame.)

4

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals, 60

The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,
Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad,
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd
and rested,
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)¹

1865

1881

LONG, TOO LONG AMERICA

LONG, too long America,
Traveling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from joys
and prosperity only,
But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish, advancing,
grappling with direst fate and recoiling not,
And now to conceive and show to the world what your chil-
dren en-masse really are,
(For who except myself has yet conceiv'd what your children
en-masse really are?)

1865

1881

GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN

I

GIVE me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full-
dazzling,
Give me juicy autumnal fruit ripe and red from the orchard,
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows,
Give me an arbor, give me the trellis'd grape,
Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me serene-moving
animals teaching content,
Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high plateaus west of the
Mississippi, and I looking up at the stars,
Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beautiful flowers
where I can walk undisturb'd,
Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd woman of whom I
should never tire,
Give me a perfect child, give me away aside from the noise of
the world a rural domestic life,
Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse by myself, for 10
my own ears only,
Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me again O Nature
your primal sanities!

¹ Whitman's voluntary hospital ministrations are further recorded in his *Specimen Days* and *The Wound Dresser* (letters).

These demanding to have them, (tired with ceaseless excitement, and rack'd by the war-strife,)
These to procure incessantly asking, rising in cries from my heart,
While yet incessantly asking still I adhere to my city,
Day upon day and year upon year O city, walking your streets,
Where you hold me enchain'd a certain time refusing to give me up,
Yet giving to make me gluttoned, enrich'd of soul, you give me forever faces;
(O I see what I sought to escape, confronting, reversing my cries,
I see my own soul trampling down what it ask'd for.)

2

Keep your splendid silent sun,
Keep your woods O Nature, and the quiet places by the woods,
Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and your corn-fields and orchards,
Keep the blossoming buckwheat fields where the Ninth-month bees hum;
Give me faces and streets—give me these phantoms incessant and endless along the trottoirs!
Give me interminable eyes—give me women—give me comrades and lovers by the thousand!
Let me see new ones every day—let me hold new ones by the hand every day!
Give me such shows—give me the streets of Manhattan!
Give me Broadway, with the soldiers marching—give me the sound of the trumpets and drums!
(The soldiers in companies or regiments—some starting away, flush'd and reckless,
Some, their time up, returning with thinn'd ranks, young, yet very old, worn, marching, noticing nothing;)
Give me the shores and wharves heavy-fringed with black ships!
O such for me! O an intense life, full to repletion and varied!
The life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel, for me!
The saloon of the steamer! the crowded excursion for me! the torchlight procession!
The dense brigade bound for the war, with high piled military wagons following;
People, endless, streaming, with strong voices, passions, pageants,

20

30

Manhattan streets with their powerful throbs, with beating
drums as now,
The endless and noisy chorus, the rustle and clank of mus-
kets, (even the sight of the wounded,)
Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus!
Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.

1865

1867

40

DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

THE last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,
Up from the east the silvery round moon,
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,
Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,
And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles,
All the channels of the city streets they 're flooding,
As with voices and with tears.

10

I hear the great drums pounding,
And the small drums steady whirring,
And every blow of the great convulsive drums,
Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,
(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,
Two veterans son and father dropt together,
And the double grave awaits them.)

20

Now nearer blow the bugles,
And the drums strike more convulsive,
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,
('Tis some mother's large transparent face,
In heaven brighter growing.)

O strong dead-march you please me!
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!
What I have I also give you.

30

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

1865-6

1881

OVER THE CARNAGE ROSE PROPHEPIC A VOICE

OVER the carnage rose prophetic a voice,
Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems of
freedom yet,
Those who love each other shall become invincible,
They shall yet make Columbia victorious.

Sons of the Mother of All, you shall yet be victorious,
You shall yet laugh to scorn the attacks of all the remainder
of the earth.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers,
If need be a thousand shall sternly immolate themselves for
one.

One from Massachusetts shall be a Missourian's comrade,
From Maine and from hot Carolina, and another an Ore-
gonese, shall be friends triune,
More precious to each other than all the riches of the earth.

10

To Michigan, Florida perfumes shall tenderly come,
Not the perfumes of flowers, but sweeter, and wafted beyond
death.

It shall be customary in the houses and streets to see manly
affection,
The most dauntless and rude shall touch face to face lightly,
The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,
The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

These shall tie you and band you stronger than hoops of iron,
I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands, with the love of lovers tie
you.

(Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?
Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.)

1860

1867

20

I SAW OLD GENERAL AT BAY

I SAW old General at bay,
(Old as he was, his gray eyes yet shone out in battle like stars,)
His small force was now completely hemm'd in, in his works,
He call'd for volunteers to run the enemy's lines, a desperate
emergency,
I saw a hundred and more step forth from the ranks, but two
or three were selected,
I saw them receive their orders aside, they listen'd with care,
the adjutant was very grave,
I saw them depart with cheerfulness, freely risking their lives.

1865

1867

THE ARTILLERYMAN'S VISION

WHILE my wife at my side lies slumbering, and the wars are
over long,
And my head on the pillow rests at home, and the vacant
midnight passes,
And through the stillness, through the dark, I hear, just hear,
the breath of my infant,
There in the room as I wake from sleep this vision presses
upon me;
The engagement opens there and then in fantasy unreal,
The skirmishers begin, they crawl cautiously ahead, I hear
the irregular snap! snap!
I hear the sounds of the different missiles, the short *t-h-t!*
t-h-t! of the rifle-balls,
I see the shells exploding leaving small white clouds, I hear
the great shells shrieking as they pass,
The grape like the hum and whirr of wind through the trees,
(tumultuous now the contest rages,)
All the scenes at the batteries rise in detail before me again,
The crashing and smoking, the pride of the men in their
pieces,
The chief-gunner ranges and sights his piece and selects a fuse
of the right time,
After firing I see him lean aside and look eagerly off to note
the effect;

10

Elsewhere I hear the cry of a regiment charging, (the young
 colonel leads himself this time with brandish'd sword,)
 I see the gaps cut by the enemy's volleys, (quickly fill'd up, no
 delay,)
 I breathe the suffocating smoke, then the flat clouds hover
 low concealing all;
 Now a strange lull for a few seconds, not a shot fired on
 either side,
 Then resumed the chaos louder than ever, with eager calls
 and orders of officers,
 While from some distant part of the field the wind wafts
 to my ears a shout of applause, (some special suc-
 cess,)
 And ever the sound of the cannon far or near, (rousing even
 in dreams a devilish exultation and all the old mad joy in
 the depths of my soul,)
 And ever the hastening of infantry shifting positions, bat-
 teries, cavalry, moving hither and thither,
 (The falling, dying, I heed not, the wounded dripping and
 red I heed not, some to the rear are hobbling,)
 Grime, heat, rush, aides-de-camp galloping by or on a full
 run,
 With the patter of small arms, the warning *s-s-t* of the rifles,
 (these in my vision I hear or see,)
 And bombs bursting in air, and at night the vari-color'd
 rockets.

1865

1881

ETHIOPIA SALUTING THE COLORS

WHO are you dusky woman, so ancient hardly human,
 With your woolly-white and turban'd head, and bare bony
 feet?
 Why rising by the roadside here, do you the colors greet?

('Tis while our army lines Carolina's sands and pines,
 Forth from thy hovel door thou Ethiopia com'st to me,
 As under doughty Sherman I march toward the sea.)¹

*Me master years a hundred since from my parents sunder'd,
 A little child, they caught me as the savage beast is caught,
 Then hither me across the sea the cruel slaver brought.*

¹ This famous and destructive march to Savannah, Georgia, cut the Confederate States in two.

No further does she say, but lingering all the day,
 Her high-borne turban'd head she wags, and rolls her dark-
 ling eye,
 And courtesies to the regiments, the guidons moving by.

What is it fateful woman, so blear, hardly human?
 Why wag your head with turban bound, yellow, red and
 green?
 Are the things so strange and marvelous you see or have
 seen?

1871

1871

NOT YOUTH PERTAINS TO ME

Not youth pertains to me,
 Nor delicatessen, I cannot beguile the time with talk,
 Awkward in the parlor, neither a dancer nor elegant,
 In the learn'd coterie sitting constrain'd and still, for learning
 inures not to me,
 Beauty, knowledge, inure not to me—yet there are two or
 three things inure to me,
 I have nourish'd the wounded and sooth'd many a dying
 soldier,
 And at intervals waiting or in the midst of camp,
 Composed these songs.

1865

1871

RACE OF VETERANS

RACE of veterans—race of victors!
 Race of the soil, ready for conflict—race of the conquering
 march!
 (No more credulity's race, abiding-temper'd race,)
 Race henceforth owning no law but the law of itself,
 Race of passion and the storm.

1865-6

1871

WORLD TAKE GOOD NOTICE

WORLD take good notice, silver stars fading,
 Milky hue ript, weft of white detaching,
 Coals thirty-eight, baleful and burning,
 Scarlet, significant, hands off warning,
 Now and henceforth flaunt from these shores.

1865

1867

O TAN-FACED PRAIRIE-BOY

O TAN-FACED prairie-boy,
Before you came to camp came many a welcome gift,
Praises and presents came and nourishing food, till at last
 among the recruits,
You came, taciturn, with nothing to give—we but look'd on
 each other,
When lo! more than all the gifts of the world you gave me.
18651867

LOOK DOWN FAIR MOON

Look down fair moon and bathe this scene,
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods on faces ghastly,
 swollen, purple,
On the dead on their backs with arms toss'd wide,
Pour down your unstinted nimbus sacred moon.
18651867

RECONCILIATION

WORD over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time
 be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly
 softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I
 draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in
 the coffin.
1865-61881

HOW SOLEMN AS ONE BY ONE

(*Washington City*, 1865)¹

How solemn as one by one,
As the ranks returning worn and sweaty, as the men file by
 where I stand,
As the faces the masks appear, as I glance at the faces study-
 ing the masks,

¹ If, as is likely, this refers to the Grand Review of the Union Armies, Whitman saw his brother, Lieutenant-colonel George Whitman, in the parade. See *Spirit whose Work is Done*, p. 272.

(As I glance upward out of this page studying you, dear friend, whoever you are,)

How solemn the thought of my whispering soul to each in the ranks, and to you!

I see behind each mask that wonder a kindred soul,
O the bullet could never kill what you really are, dear friend,
Nor the bayonet stab what you really are;

The soul! yourself I see, great as any, good as the best,
Waiting secure and content, which the bullet could never 10
kill,

Nor the bayonet stab O friend.

1865?

1871

AS I LAY WITH MY HEAD IN YOUR LAP CAMERADO

As I lay with my head in your lap camerado,
The confession I made I resume, what I said to you and the
open air I resume,

I know I am restless and make others so,
I know my words are weapons full of danger, full of death,
For I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws, to
unsettle them,

I am more resolute because all have denied me than I could
ever have been had all accepted me,

I heed not and have never heeded either experience, cautions,
majorities, nor ridicule,

And the threat of what is call'd hell is little or nothing to me,
And the lure of what is call'd heaven is little or nothing to me;

Dear camerado! I confess I have urged you onward with me, 10
and still urge you, without the least idea what is our
destination,

Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly quell'd and
defeated.

1865-6

1881

DELICATE CLUSTER

DELICATE cluster! flag of teeming life!

Covering all my lands—all my seashores lining!

Flag of death! (how I watch'd you through the smoke of
battle pressing!

How I heard you flap and rustle, cloth defiant!)

Flag cerulean—sunny flag, with the orbs of night dappled!

Ah my silvery beauty—ah my woolly white and crimson!
Ah to sing the song of you, my matron mighty!
My sacred one, my mother!

1871

1871

TO A CERTAIN CIVILIAN

DID you ask dulcet rhymes from me?
Did you seek the civilian's peaceful and languishing rhymes?
Did you find what I sang erewhile so hard to follow?
Why I was not singing erewhile for you to follow, to under-
stand—nor am I now;
(I have been born of the same as the war was born,
The drum-corps' rattle is ever to me sweet music, I love well
the martial dirge,
With slow wail and convulsive throb leading the officer's
funeral;)
What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I? therefore leave
my works,
And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and with
piano-tunes,
For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.

10

1865

1871

LO, VICTRESS ON THE PEAKS

Lo, Victress on the peaks,
Where thou with mighty brow regarding the world,
(The world O Libertad, that vainly conspired against thee,) Out of its countless beleaguering toils, after thwarting them
all,
Dominant, with the dazzling sun around thee,
Flauntest now unharm'd in immortal soundness and bloom
—lo, in these hours supreme,
No poem proud, I chanting bring to thee, nor mastery's rap-
turous verse,
But a cluster containing night's darkness and blood-dripping
wounds,
And psalms of the dead.

1865-6

1881

SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE

(*Washington City, 1865*)

SPIRIT whose work is done—spirit of dreadful hours!
Ere departing fade from my eyes your forests of bayonets;
Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts, (yet onward ever unfaltering pressing,)
Spirit of many a solemn day and many a savage scene—
electric spirit,
That with muttering voice through the war now closed, like a
tireless phantom flitted,
Rousing the land with breath of flame, while you beat and
beat the drum,
Now as the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the last,
reverberates round me,
As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return from the
battles,¹
As the muskets of the young men yet lean over their shoulders,
As I look on the bayonets bristling over their shoulders,
As those slanted bayonets, whole forests of them appearing
in the distance, approach and pass on, returning homeward,
Moving with steady motion, swaying to and fro to the right
and left,
Evenly, lightly rising and falling while the steps keep time;
Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one day, but pale as
death next day,
Touch my mouth ere you depart, press my lips close,
Leave me your pulses of rage—bequeath them to me—fill me
with currents convulsive,
Let them scorch and blister out of my chants when you are
gone,
Let them identify you to the future in these songs.

1865-6

1881

ADIEU TO A SOLDIER

ADIEU O soldier,
You of the rude campaigning, (which we shared,)
The rapid march, the life of the camp,
The hot contention of opposing fronts, the long manœuvre,
Red battles with their slaughter, the stimulus, the strong
terrific game,

¹ The Grand Review of the Union Armies.

Spell of all brave and manly hearts, the trains of time through
you and like of you all fill'd,
With war and war's expression.

Adieu dear comrade,
Your mission is fulfill'd—but I, more warlike,
Myself and this contentious soul of mine,
Still on our own campaigning bound,
Through untried roads with ambushes opponents lined,
Through many a sharp defeat and many a crisis, often
baffled,
Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight out—aye
here,
To fiercer, weightier battles give expression.

1871

1871

TURN O LIBERTAD

TURN O Libertad, for the war is over,
From it and all henceforth expanding, doubting no more,
resolute, sweeping the world,
Turn from lands retrospective recording proofs of the past,
From the singers that sing the trailing glories of the past,
From the chants of the feudal world, the triumphs of kings,
slavery, caste,
Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come—give
up that backward world,
Leave to the singers of hitherto,¹ give them the trailing past,
But what remains remains for singers for you—wars to come
are for you,
(Lo, how the wars of the past have duly inured to you, and
the wars of the present also inure;)
Then turn, and be not alarm'd O Libertad—turn your un-
dying face,
To where the future, greater than all the past,
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.

1865

1871

TO THE LEAVEN'D SOIL THEY TROD

To the leaven'd soil they trod calling I sing for the last,
(Forth from my tent emerging for good, loosing, untying the
tent-ropes,)
In the freshness the forenoon air, in the far-stretching circuits
and vistas again to peace restored,

¹ Used as a substantive.

To the fiery fields emanative and the endless vistas beyond,
 to the South and the North,
 To the leaven'd soil of the general Western world to attest
 my songs,
 To the Alleghanian hills and the tireless Mississippi,
 To the rocks I calling sing, and all the trees in the woods,
 To the plains of the poems of heroes, to the prairies spread-
 ing wide,
 To the far-off sea and the unseen winds, and the sane im-
 palpable air;
 And responding they answer all, (but not in words,) 10
 The average earth, the witness of war and peace, acknow-
 ledges mutely,
 The prairie draws me close, as the father to bosom broad the
 son,
 The Northern ice and rain that began me nourish me to the
 end,
 But the hot sun of the South is to fully ripen my songs.

1865-6

1881

Memories of President Lincoln

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

I

WHEN lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
 And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the
 night,
 I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.¹

Ever-returning spring, trinity² sure to me you bring,
 Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
 And thought of him I love.

¹ Abraham Lincoln was shot by an assassin, 14th April 1865.

✓ ² In this rondo-like poem Whitman employs three themes:
 the historical fact (star), his own sense of personal loss (lilac),
 and the poet's triumphant comment on death (bird).

2

O powerful western fallen star!
 O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
 O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that hides the
 star!
 O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me! 10
 O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-
 wash'd palings,
 Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves
 of rich green,
 With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the per-
 fume strong I love,
 With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the door-
 yard,
 With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of
 rich green,
 A sprig with its flower I break.

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
 A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush, 20
 The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
 Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
 Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,
 If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die.)

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
 Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets
 peep'd from the ground, spotting the gray debris,
 Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the
 endless grass,
 Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud
 in the dark-brown fields uprisen,
 Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the or- 30
 chards,

Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.¹

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the
land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in
black,
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd
women standing,
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the
night,
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and
the unbared heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre
faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices 40
rising strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the
coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where
amid these you journey,
With the tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7

(Nor for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you
O sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies, 50
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

¹ The funeral train passed through Baltimore, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, New York, Cleveland, and Chicago, and ended its journey of over 1,500 miles at Springfield, Illinois.

O western orb sailing the heaven,
 Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I
 walk'd,
 As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
 As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night
 after night,
 As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side,
 (while the other stars all look'd on,)
 As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I
 know not what kept me from sleep,) 60
 As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how
 full you were of woe,
 As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool
 transparent night,
 As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the nether-
 ward black of the night,
 As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad
 orb,
 Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

9

Sing on there in the swamp,
 O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your
 call,
 I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
 But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,
 The star my departing comrade holds and detains me. 70

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
 And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that
 has gone?
 And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
 Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western
 sea, till there on the prairies meeting,
 These and with these and the breath of my chant,
 I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
 And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
 To adorn the burial-house of him I love? 80

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
 With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke
 lucid and bright,
 With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent,
 sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,
 With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green
 leaves of the trees prolific,
 In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with
 a wind-dapple here and there,
 With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the
 sky, and shadows,
 And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of
 chimneys,
 And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the work-
 men homeward returning.

12

Lo, body and soul—this land,
 My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and 90
 hurrying tides, and the ships,
 The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the
 light, Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,
 And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
 The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
 The gentle soft-born measureless light,
 The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
 The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,
 Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

13

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
 Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from 100
 the bushes,
 Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
 Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!
 O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!
 You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon
 depart,)

Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
 In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring,
 and the farmers preparing their crops,
 In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes 110
 and forests,
 In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and
 the storms,)
 Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing,
 and the voices of children and women,
 The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they
 sail'd,
 And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all
 busy with labor,
 And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each
 with its meals and minutia of daily usages,
 And the streets how their throbbings throb'd, and the cities
 pent—lo, then and there,
 Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me
 with the rest,
 Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
 And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of
 death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me, 120
 And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
 And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the
 hands of companions,
 I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,
 Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in
 the dimness,
 To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
 The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,
 And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
 From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still, 130
 Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
 As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,
 And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.*

140

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come un-
falteringly.*

*Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the
dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.*

150

*From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feast-
ings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky
are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I
know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and
the prairies wide,
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and
ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.*

160

15

*To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.*

*Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
280*

Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.

170

And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with
missiles I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and
bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in
silence,)
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

180

16

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of
my soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering
song,
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling,
flooding the night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet
again bursting with joy,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with
spring.

190

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, com-
muning with thee,
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,
With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance
full of woe,

200

With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to
keep, for the dead I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and
this for his dear sake,

Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

1865-6

1881

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores
a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces
turning;

19

Here Captain! dear father!
The arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and
done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won:

20

Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

1865

1871

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY

(May 4, 1865)¹

HUSH'D be the camps to-day,
And soldiers let us drape our war-worn weapons,
And each with musing soul retire to celebrate,
Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts,
Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's dark events,
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

But sing poet in our name,
Sing of the love we bore him—because you—dweller in
camps, know it truly.

As they invault the coffin there,
Sing—as they close the doors of earth upon him—one verse,
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

1865

1871

10

THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN

THIS dust was once the man,
Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose cautious hand,
Against the foulest crime in history known in any land or age,
Was saved the Union of these States.

1871

1871

By Blue Ontario's Shore

I

By blue Ontario's shore,
As I mused of these warlike days and of peace return'd,² and
the dead that return no more,
A Phantom gigantic superb, with stern visage accosted me,
Chant me the poem, it said, that comes from the soul of America,
chant me the carol of victory,

¹ Lincoln was buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield, Illinois, on this date.

² Though certain passages were interpolated after the Civil War, much of the original poem is a redaction of parts of the prose preface to the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1855).

*And strike up the marches of Libertad, marches more powerful
yet,
And sing me before you go the song of the throes of Democracy.*

(Democracy, the destin'd conqueror, yet treacherous lip-
smiles everywhere,
And death and infidelity at every step.)

2

A Nation announcing itself,
I myself make the only growth by which I can be appreciated, 10
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my own forms.

A breed whose proof is in time and deeds,
What we are we are, nativity is answer enough to objections,
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,
We are executive in ourselves, we are sufficient in the variety
of ourselves,
We are the most beautiful to ourselves and in ourselves,
We stand self-pois'd in the middle, branching thence over the
world,
From Missouri, Nebraska, or Kansas, laughing attacks to
scorn.
Nothing is sinful to us outside of ourselves, 20
Whatever appears, whatever does not appear, we are beauti-
ful or sinful in ourselves only.

(O Mother—O Sisters¹ dear!
If we are lost, no victor else has destroy'd us,
It is by ourselves we go down to eternal night.)

3

Have you thought there could be but a single supreme?
There can be any number of supremes—one does not coun-
tervail another any more than one eyesight countervails
another, or one life countervails another.

All is eligible to all,
All is for individuals, all is for you,
No condition is prohibited, not God's or any.

¹ The Union and the sister states.

All comes by the body, only health puts you rapport with the
universe.

30

Produce great Persons, the rest follows.

4

Piety and conformity to them that like,
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like,
I am he who tauntingly compels men, women, nations,
Crying, Leap from your seats and contend for your lives!

I am he who walks the States with a barb'd tongue, question-
ing every one I meet,
Who are you that wanted only to be told what you knew
before?
Who are you that wanted only a book to join you in your
nonsense?

(With pangs and cries as thine own O bearer of many chil-
dren,
These clamors wild to a race of pride I give.)

40

O lands, would you be freer than all that has ever been
before?
If you would be freer than all that has been before, come
listen to me.

Fear grace, elegance, civilization, delicatessen,
Fear the mellow sweet, the sucking of honey-juice,
Beware the advancing mortal ripening of Nature,
Beware what precedes the decay of the ruggedness of states
and men.

5

Ages, precedents, have long been accumulating undirected
materials,
America brings builders, and brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done their
work and pass'd to other spheres,
A work remains, the work of surpassing all they have done.

50

America, curious toward foreign characters, stands by its
own at all hazards,
Stands removed, spacious, composite, sound, initiates the
true use of precedents,

Does not repel them or the past or what they have produced
under their forms,
Takes the lesson with calmness, perceives the corpse slowly
borne from the house,
Perceives that it waits a little while in the door, that it was
fittest for its days,
That its life has descended to the stalwart and well-shaped
heir who approaches,
And that he shall be fittest for his days.

Any period one nation must lead,
One land must be the promise and reliance of the future.

These States are the amplest poem,
Here is not merely a nation but a teeming Nation of nations,
Here the doings of men correspond with the broadcast do-
ings of the day and night,
Here is what moves in magnificent masses careless of par-
ticulars,
Here are the roughs, beards, friendliness, combativeness, the
soul loves,
Here the flowing trains, here the crowds, equality, diversity,
the soul loves.

60

6

Land of lands and bards to corroborate!
Of them standing among them, one lifts to the light a west-
bred face,
To him the hereditary countenance bequeath'd both mother's
and father's,
His first parts substances, earth, water, animals, trees,
Built of the common stock, having room for far and near,
Used to dispense with other lands, incarnating this land,
Attracting it body and soul to himself, hanging on its neck
with incomparable love,
Plunging his seminal muscle into its merits and demerits,
Making its cities, beginnings, events, diversities, wars, vocal
in him,
Making its rivers, lakes, bays, embouchure in him,
Mississippi with yearly freshets and changing chutes, Colum-
bia, Niagara, Hudson, spending themselves lovingly in
him,
If the Atlantic coast stretch or the Pacific coast stretch, he
stretching with them North or South,
Spanning between them East and West, and touching what-
ever is between them,

70

Growths growing from him to offset the growths of pine,
cedar, hemlock, live-oak, locust, chestnut, hickory,
cottonwood, orange, magnolia,

Tangles as tangled in him as any cranebake or swamp, 80
He likening sides and peaks of mountains, forests coated
with northern transparent ice,

Off him pasturage sweet and natural as savanna,¹ upland,
prairie,

Through him flights, whirls, screams, answering those of the
fish-hawk, mocking-bird, night-heron, and eagle,

His spirit surrounding his country's spirit, unclosed to good
and evil,

Surrounding the essences of real things, old times and pre-
sent times,

Surrounding just found shores, islands, tribes of red abori-
gines,

Weather-beaten vessels, landings, settlements, embryo
stature and muscle,

The haughty defiance of the Year One,² war, peace, the for-
mation of the Constitution,

The separate States, the simple elastic scheme, the immi-
grants,

The Union always swarming with blatherers and always sure 90
and impregnable,

The unsurvey'd interior, log-houses, clearings, wild animals,
hunters, trappers,

Surrounding the multiform agriculture, mines, temperature,
the gestation of new States,

Congress convening every Twelfth-month, the members duly
coming up from the uttermost parts,

Surrounding the noble character of mechanics and farmers,
especially the young men,

Responding their manners, speech, dress, friendships, the
gait they have of persons who never knew how it felt to
stand in the presence of superiors,

The freshness and candor of their physiognomy, the copious-
ness and decision of their phrenology,³

The picturesque looseness of their carriage, their fierceness
when wrong'd,

The fluency of their speech, their delight in music, their
curiosity, good temper and open-handedness, the whole
composite make,

¹ A treeless plain, meadow, or prairie.

² The first year of American independence.

³ Whitman took this pseudo-science seriously.

The prevailing ardor and enterprise, the large amative-
ness,¹

The perfect equality of the female with the male, the fluid 100
movement of the population,

The superior marine, free commerce, fisheries, whaling, gold-
digging,

Wharf-hemm'd cities, railroad and steamboat lines inter-
secting all points,

Factories, mercantile life, labor-saving machinery, the North-
east, Northwest, Southwest,

Manhattan firemen, the Yankee swap,² southern plantation
life,

Slavery—the murderous, treacherous conspiracy to raise it
upon the ruins of all the rest,

On and on to the grapple with it—Assassin! then your life or
ours be the stake, and respite no more.

7

(Lo, high toward heaven, this day,

Libertad, from the conqueress' field return'd,

I mark the new aureola around your head,

No more of soft astral, but dazzling and fierce, 110

With war's flames and the lambent lightnings playing,

And your port immovable where you stand,

With still the inextinguishable glance and the clinch'd and
lifted fist,

And your foot on the neck of the menacing one, the scorner
utterly crush'd beneath you,

The menacing arrogant one that strode and advanced with
his senseless scorn, bearing the murderous knife,

The wide-swelling one, the braggart that would yesterday do
so much,

To-day a carrion dead and damn'd, the despised of all the
earth,

An offal rank, to the dunghill maggots spurn'd.)

8

Others take finish, but the Republic is ever constructive and
ever keeps vista,

Others adorn the past, but you O days of the present, I adorn 120
you,

¹ Phrenological term for the faculty which was supposed
to influence sexual love.

² Barter.

O days of the future I believe in you—I isolate myself for
your sake,
O America because you build for mankind I build for you,
O well-beloved stone-cutters, I lead them who plan with de-
cision and science,
Lead the present with friendly hand toward the future.

(Bravas to all impulses sending sane children to the next
age!

But damn that which spends itself with no thought of the
stain, pains, dismay, feebleness, it is bequeathing.)

9

I listened to the Phantom by Ontario's shore,
I heard the voice arising demanding bards,
By them all native and grand, by them alone can these States
be fused into the compact organism of a Nation.

To hold men together by paper and seal or by compulsion is 130
no account,

That only holds men together which aggregates all in a living
principle, as the hold of the limbs of the body or the
fibres of plants.

Of all races and eras these States with veins full of poetical
stuff most need poets, and are to have the greatest, and
use them the greatest,

Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much
as their poets shall.

(Soul of love and tongue of fire!

Eye to pierce the deepest deeps and sweep the world!

Ah Mother, prolific and full in all besides, yet how long
barren, barren?)

10

Of these States the poet is the equable man,
Not in him but off from him things are grotesque, eccentric,
fail of their full returns,

Nothing out of its place is good, nothing in its place is bad,
He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion, 140
neither more nor less,

He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key,

He is the equalizer of his age and land,

He supplies what wants supplying, he checks what wants
checking,

In peace out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich,
thrifty, building populous towns, encouraging agricul-
ture, arts, commerce, lighting the study of man, the soul,
health, immortality, government,

In war he is the best backer of the war, he fetches artillery as
good as the engineer's, he can make every word he
speaks draw blood,

The years straying toward infidelity he withholds by his
steady faith,

He is no arguer, he is judgment, (Nature accepts him abso-
lutely,)

He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling round
a helpless thing,

As he sees the farthest he has the most faith,

His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things,

In the dispute on God and eternity he is silent,

He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denoue-
ment,

He sees eternity in men and women, he does not see men and
women as dreams or dots.

For the great Idea, the idea of perfect and free individuals,
For that, the bard walks in advance, leader of leaders,
The attitude of him cheers up slaves and horrifies foreign
despots.

Without extinction is Liberty, without retrograde is Equality,
They live in the feelings of young men and the best women,
(Not for nothing have the indomitable heads of the earth
been always ready to fall for Liberty.)

II

For the great Idea,
That, O my brethren, that is the mission of poets.

Songs of stern defiance ever ready,
Songs of the rapid arming and the march,
The flag of peace quick-folded, and instead the flag we know,
Warlike flag of the great Idea.

(Angry cloth I saw there leaping!
I stand again in leaden rain your flapping folds saluting,
I sing you over all, flying beckoning through the fight—O the
hard-contested fight!

The cannons ope their rosy-flashing muzzles—the hurtled
balls scream,

The battle-front forms amid the smoke—the volleys pour 170
incessant from the line,
Hark, the ringing word *Charge!*—now the tussle and the
furious maddening yells,
Now the corpses tumble curl'd upon the ground,
Cold, cold in death, for precious life of you,
Angry cloth I saw there leaping.)

12

Are you he who would assume a place to teach or be a poet
here in the States?

The place is august, the terms obdurate.

Who would assume to teach here may well prepare himself
body and mind,

He may well survey, ponder, arm, fortify, harden, make lithe
himself,

He shall surely be question'd beforehand by me with many
and stern questions.

Who are you indeed who would talk or sing to America? 180

Have you studied out the land, its idioms and men?

Have you learn'd the physiology, phrenology, politics, geo-
graphy, pride, freedom, friendship of the land? its sub-
stratums and objects?

Have you consider'd the organic compact of the first day of
the first year of Independence, sign'd by the Commis-
sioners, ratified by the States, and read by Washington
at the head of the army?

Have you possess'd yourself of the Federal Constitution?

Do you see who have left all feudal processes and poems
behind them, and assumed the poems and processes of
Democracy?

Are you faithful to things? do you teach what the land and
sea, the bodies of men, womanhood, amateness,
heroic angers, teach?

Have you sped through fleeting customs, popularities?

Can you hold your hand against all seductions, follies, whirls,
fierce contentions? are you very strong? are you really of
the whole People?

Are you not of some coterie? some school or mere religion?

Are you done with reviews and criticisms of life? animating 190
now to life itself?

Have you vivified yourself from the maternity of these States?

Have you too the old ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality?
Do you hold the like love for those hardening to maturity?
for the last-born? little and big? and for the errant?

What is this you bring my America?
Is it uniform with my country?
Is it not something that has been better told or done before?
Have you not imported this or the spirit of it in some ship?
Is it not a mere tale? a rhyme? a prettiness?—is the good old
cause in it?
Has it not dangled long at the heels of the poets, politicians,
literats,¹ of enemies' lands?
Does it not assume that what is notoriously gone is still here? 200
Does it answer universal needs? will it improve manners?
Does it sound with trumpet-voice the proud victory of the
Union in that secession war?
Can your performance face the open fields and the seaside?
Will it absorb into me as I absorb food, air, to appear again
in my strength, gait, face?
Have real employments contributed to it? original makers,
not mere amanuenses?
Does it meet modern discoveries, calibres, facts, face to face?
What does it mean to American persons, progresses, cities?
Chicago, Kanada, Arkansas?
Does it see behind the apparent custodians the real custodians
standing, menacing, silent, the mechanics, Manhattan-
ese, Western men, Southerners, significant alike in their
apathy, and in the promptness of their love?
Does it see what finally befalls, and has always finally be-
fallen, each temporizer, patcher, outsider, partialist,
alarmist, infidel, who has ever ask'd any thing of
America?
What mocking and scornful negligence? 210
The track strew'd with the dust of skeletons,
By the roadside others disdainfully toss'd.

13

Rhymes and rhymers pass away, poems distill'd from poems
pass away,
The swarms of reflectors and the polite pass, and leave ashes,
Admirers, importers, obedient persons, make but the soil of
literature,
America justifies itself, give it time, no disguise can deceive it
or conceal from it, it is impassive enough,

¹ Literati.

Only toward the likes of itself will it advance to meet them,
If its poets appear it will in due time advance to meet them,
there is no fear of mistake,
(The proof of a poet shall be sternly deferr'd till his country
absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorb'd it.)

He masters whose spirit masters, he tastes sweetest who 220
results sweetest in the long run,
The blood of the brawn beloved of time is unconstraint;
In the need of songs, philosophy, an appropriate native
grand-opera, shipcraft, any craft,
He or she is greatest who contributes the greatest original
practical example.

Already a nonchalant breed, silently emerging, appears on
the streets,
People's lips salute only doers, lovers, satisfiers, positive
knowers,
There will shortly be no more priests, I say their work is
done,
Death is without emergencies here, but life is perpetual
emergencies here,
Are your body, days, manners, superb? after death you shall
be superb,
Justice, health, self-esteem, clear the way with irresistible
power;
How dare you place any thing before a man? 230

14

Fall behind me States!
A man before all—myself, typical, before all.

Give me the pay I have served for,
Give to sing the songs of the great Idea, take all the rest,
I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised riches,
I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood up for the
stupid and crazy, devoted my income and labor to
others,
Hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience and
indulgence toward the people, taken off my hat to nothing
known or unknown,
Gone freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the
young, and with the mothers of families,
Read these leaves to myself in the open air, tried them by
trees, stars, rivers,

Dismiss'd whatever insulted my own soul or defiled my 240
 body,
 Claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully claim'd
 for others on the same terms,
 Sped to the camps, and comrades found and accepted from
 every State,
 (Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd to breathe
 his last,
 This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourish'd, rais'd,
 restored,
 To life recalling many a prostrate form;)
 I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of the
 taste of myself,
 Rejecting none, permitting all.
 (Say O Mother, have I not to your thought been faithful?
 Have I not through life kept you and yours before me?)

15

I swear I begin to see the meaning of these things, 250
 It is not the earth, it is not America who is so great,
 It is I who am great or to be great, it is You up there,¹ or any
 one,
 It is to walk rapidly through civilizations, governments,
 theories,
 Through poems, pageants, shows, to form individuals.
 Underneath all, individuals,
 I swear nothing is good to me now that ignores individuals,
 The American compact is altogether with individuals,
 The only government is that which makes minute of indi-
 viduals,
 The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one
 single individual—namely to You.
 (Mother! ² with subtle sense severe, with the naked sword in 260
 your hand,
 I saw you at last refuse to treat but directly with individuals.)

16

Underneath all, Nativity,
 I swear I will stand by my own nativity, pious or impious so
 be it;
 I swear I am charm'd with nothing except nativity,
 Men, women, cities, nations, are only beautiful from nativity.

¹ The reader.

² The nation.

Underneath all is the Expression of love for men and women,
(I swear I have seen enough of mean and impotent modes of
expressing love for men and women,
After this day I take my own modes of expressing love for
men and women.)

I swear I will have each quality of my race in myself,
(Talk as you like, he only suits these States whose manners 270
favor the audacity and sublime turbulence of the States.)

Underneath the lessons of things, spirits, Nature, govern-
ments, ownerships, I swear I perceive other lessons,
Underneath all to me is myself, to you yourself, (the same
monotonous old song.)

17

O I see flashing that this America is only you and me,
Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me,
Its crimes, lies, thefts, defections, are you and me,
Its Congress is you and me, the officers, capitol, armies,
ships, are you and me,
Its endless gestations of new States are you and me,
The war, (that war so bloody and grim, the war I will hence-
forth forget), was you and me,
Natural and artificial are you and me,
Freedom, language, poems, employments, are you and me, 280
Past, present, future, are you and me.

I dare not shirk any part of myself,
Not any part of America good or bad,
Not to build for that which builds for mankind,
Not to balance ranks, complexions, creeds, and the sexes,
Not to justify science nor the march of equality,
Nor to feed the arrogant blood of the brawn belov'd of time.

I am for those that have never been master'd,
For men and women whose tempers have never been mas-
ter'd,
For those whom laws, theories, conventions, can never 290
master.

I am for those who walk abreast with the whole earth,
Who inaugurate one to inaugurate all.

I will not be outfaced by irrational things,
I will penetrate what it is in them that is sarcastic upon me,

I will make cities and civilizations defer to me,
This is what I have learnt from America—it is the amount,
and it I teach again.

(Democracy, while weapons were everywhere aim'd at your
breast,
I saw you serenely give birth to immortal children, saw in
dreams your dilating form,
Saw you with spreading mantle covering the world.)

18

I will confront these shows of the day and night, 300
I will know if I am to be less than they,
I will see if I am not as majestic as they,
I will see if I am not as subtle and real as they,
I will see if I am to be less generous than they,
I will see if I have no meaning, while the houses and ships
have meaning,
I will see if the fishes and birds are to be enough for them-
selves, and I am not to be enough for myself.

I match my spirit against yours you orbs, growths, moun-
tains, brutes,
Copious as you are I absorb you all in myself, and become
the master myself,
America isolated yet embodying all, what is it finally except
myself?

These States, what are they except myself? 310

I know now why the earth is gross, tantalizing, wicked, it is
for my sake,
I take you specially to be mine, you terrible, rude forms.

(Mother, bend down, bend close to me your face,
I know not what these plots and wars and deferments are for,
I know not fruition's success, but I know that through war
and crime your work goes on, and must yet go on.)

19

Thus by blue Ontario's shore,
While the winds fann'd me and the waves came trooping to-
ward me,

I thrill'd with the power's pulsations, and the charm of my
theme was upon me,
Till the tissues that held me parted their ties upon me.

And I saw the free souls of poets,
The loftiest bards of past ages strode before me,
Strange large men, long unwaked, undisclosed, were disclosed to me.

320

20

O my rapt verse, my call, mock me not!
Not for the bards of the past, not to invoke them have I
launch'd you forth,
Not to call even those lofty bards here by Ontario's shores,
Have I sung so capricious and loud my savage song.

Bards for my own land only I invoke,
(For the war, the war is over, the field is clear'd,)
Till they strike up marches henceforth triumphant and onward,
To cheer O Mother your boundless expectant soul.

330

Bards of the great Idea! bards of the peaceful inventions!
(for the war, the war is over!)
Yet bards of latent armies, a million soldiers waiting ever-ready,
Bards with songs as from burning coals or the lightning's fork'd stripes!
Ample Ohio's, Kanada's bards—bards of California! inland bards—bards of the war!
You by my charm I invoke.

1856

1881

REVERSALS

LET that which stood in front go behind,
Let that which was behind advance to the front,
Let bigots, fools, unclean persons, offer new propositions,
Let the old propositions be postponed,
Let a man seek pleasure everywhere except in himself,
Let a woman seek happiness everywhere except in herself.

1856

1881

Autumn Rivulets

AS CONSEQUENT, Etc.

As consequent from store of summer rains,
Or wayward rivulets in autumn flowing,
Or many a herb-lined brook's reticulations,
Or subterranean sea-rills making for the sea,
Songs of continued years I sing.

Life's ever-modern rapids first, (soon, soon to blend,
With the old streams of death.)

Some threading Ohio's farm-fields or the woods,
Some down Colorado's cañons from sources of perpetual
snow,
Some half-hid in Oregon, or away southward in Texas, 10
Some in the north finding their way to Erie, Niagara, Ottawa,
Some to Atlantica's bays, and so to the great salt brine.

In you whoe'er you are my book perusing,
In I myself, in all the world, these currents flowing,
All, all toward the mystic ocean tending.

Currents for starting a continent new,
Overtures sent to the solid out of the liquid,
Fusion of ocean and land, tender and pensive waves,
(Not safe and peaceful only, waves rous'd and ominous too,
Out of the depths the storm's abysmic waves, who knows 20
whence?)
Raging over the vast, with many a broken spar and tatter'd
sail.)

Or from the sea of Time, collecting vasting¹ all, I bring,
A windrow-drift of weeds and shells.

O little shells, so curious-convolute, so limpid-cold and
voiceless,
Will you not little shells to the tympan of temples held,
Murmurs and echoes still call up, eternity's music faint and
far,
Wafted inland, sent from Atlantica's rim, strains for the soul
of the prairies,

¹ This participle is a Whitman coinage.

Whisper'd reverberations, chords for the ear of the West
joyously sounding,
Your tidings old, yet ever new and untranslatable,
Infinitesimals out of my life, and many a life,
(For not my life and yours alone I give—all, all I give,)
These waifs from the deep, cast high and dry,
Wash'd on America's shores?

1881

1881

30

THE RETURN OF THE HEROES

I

For the lands and for these passionate days and for myself,
Now I awhile retire to thee O soil of autumn fields,
Reclining on thy breast, giving myself to thee,
Answering the pulses of thy sane and equable heart,
Tuning a verse for thee.

O earth that hast no voice, confide to me a voice,
O harvest of my lands—O boundless summer growths,
O lavish brown parturient earth—O infinite teeming womb,
A song to narrate thee.

2

Over upon this stage,
Is acted God's calm annual drama,
Gorgeous procession, songs of birds,
Sunrise that fullest feeds and freshens most the soul,
The heaving sea, the waves upon the shore, the musical,
strong waves,
The woods, the stalwart trees, the slender, tapering trees,
The liliput countless armies of the grass,
The heat, the showers, the measureless pasturages,
The scenery of the snows, the winds' free orchestra,
The stretching light-hung roof of clouds, the clear cerulean
and the silvery fringes,
The high dilating stars, the placid beckoning stars,
The moving flocks and herds, the plains and emerald meadows,
The shows of all the varied lands and all the growths and
products.

10

20

3

Fecund America—to-day,
Thou art over set in births and joys!

Thou groan'st with riches, thy wealth clothes thee as a
 swathing-garment,
 Thou laughest loud with ache of great possessions,
 A myriad-twining life like interlacing vines binds all thy vast
 demesne,
 As some huge ship freighted to water's edge thou ridest into
 port,
 As rain falls from the heaven and vapors rise from earth, so
 have the precious values fallen upon thee and risen out
 of thee;
 Thou envy of the globe! thou miracle!
 Thou, bathed, choked, swimming in plenty,
 Thou lucky Mistress of the tranquil barns,
 Thou Prairie Dame that sittest in the middle and lookest out
 upon thy world, and lookest East and lookest West,
 Dispensatress,¹ that by a word givest a thousand miles, a
 million farms, and missest nothing,
 Thou all-acceptress²—thou hospitable, (thou only art hospit-
 able as God is hospitable.)

30

4

When late I sang sad was my voice,
 Sad were the shows around me with deafening noises of
 hatred and smoke of war;
 In the midst of the conflict, the heroes, I stood,
 Or pass'd with slow step through the wounded and dying.
 But now I sing not war,
 Nor the measur'd march of soldiers, nor the tents of camps,
 Nor the regiments hastily coming up deploying in line of
 battle;
 No more the sad, unnatural shows of war.
 Ask'd room those flush'd immortal ranks, the first forth-
 stepping armies?
 Ask room alas the ghastly ranks, the armies dread that
 follow'd.
 (Pass, pass, ye proud brigades, with your tramping sinewy
 legs,
 With your shoulders young and strong, with your knapsacks
 and your muskets;
 How elate I stood and watch'd you, where starting off you
 march'd.

40

¹ A Whitman coinage for *dispensatrix*.

² A similar coinage.

Pass—then rattle drums again,
For an army heaves in sight, O another gathering army, 50
Swarming, trailing on the rear, O you dread accruing army,
O you regiments so piteous, with your mortal diarrhoea, with
your fever,
O my land's maim'd darlings, with the plenteous bloody
bandage and the crutch,
Lo, your pallid army follows.)

5

But on these days of brightness,
On the far-stretching beauteous landscape, the roads and
lanes, the high-piled farm-wagons, and the fruits and
barns,
Should the dead intrude?

Ah the dead to me mar not, they fit well in Nature,
They fit very well in the landscape under the trees and grass,
And along the edge of the sky in the horizon's far margin. 60

Nor do I forget you Departed,
Nor in winter or summer my lost ones,
But most in the open air as now when my soul is rapt and at
peace, like pleasing phantoms,
Your memories rising glide silently by me.

6

I saw the day the return of the heroes,
(Yet the heroes never surpass'd shall never return,
Them that day I saw not.)

I saw the interminable corps, I saw the processions of armies,
I saw them approaching, defiling by with divisions,
Streaming northward, their work done, camping awhile in 70
clusters of mighty camps.

No holiday soldiers—youthful, yet veterans,
Worn, swart, handsome, strong, of the stock of homestead¹
and workshop,
Harden'd of many a long campaign and sweaty march,
Inured on many a hard-fought bloody field.

¹ In America, a farm occupied by the owner and his family, especially a plot of a hundred and sixty acres granted the settler in new territory by the Homestead Act passed by Congress in 1862.

A pause—the armies wait,
A million flush'd embattled conquerors wait,
The world too waits, then soft as breaking night and sure as
dawn,
They melt, they disappear.

Exult O lands! victorious lands!
Not there your victory on those red shuddering fields, 80
But here and hence your victory.

Melt, melt away ye armies—disperse ye blue-clad soldiers,
Resolve ye back again, give up for good your deadly arms,
Other the arms the fields henceforth for you, or South or
North,
With saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars.

7

Loud O my throat, and clear O soul!
The season of thanks and the voice of full-yielding,
The chant of joy and power for boundless fertility.

All till'd and untill'd fields expand before me,
I see the true arenas of my race, or first or last, 90
Man's innocent and strong arenas.

I see the heroes at other toils,
I see well-wielded in their hands the better weapons.

I see where the Mother of All,
With full-spanning eye gazes forth, dwells long,
And counts the varied gathering of the products.

Busy the far, the sunlit panorama,
Prairie, orchard, and yellow grain of the North,
Cotton and rice of the South and Louisianian cane,¹
Open unseeded fallows, rich fields of clover and timothy, 100
Kine and horses feeding, and droves of sheep and swine,
And many a stately river flowing and many a jocund brook,
And healthy uplands with herby-perfumed breezes,
And the good green grass, that delicate miracle the ever-
recurring grass.

8

Toil on heroes! harvest the products!
Not alone on those warlike fields the Mother of All,
With dilated form and lambent eyes watch'd you.

¹ Sugar cane.

Toil on heroes! toil well! handle the weapons well!
The Mother of All, yet here as ever she watches you.

Well-pleased America thou beholdest,
Over the fields of the West those crawling monsters,
The human-divine inventions, the labor-saving implements;
Beholdest moving in every direction imbued as with life the
 revolving hay-rakes,
The steam-power reaping-machines and the horse-power
 machines,
The engines, thrashers of grain and cleaners of grain, well
 separating the straw, the nimble work of the patent
 pitchfork,
Beholdest the newer saw-mill, the southern cotton-gin, and
 the rice-cleanser.
Beneath thy look O Maternal,
With these and else and with their own strong hands the
 heroes harvest.

110

All gather and all harvest,
Yet but for thee O Powerful, not a scythe might swing as now
 in security,
Not a maize-stalk dangle as now its silken tassels in peace.

120

Under thee only they harvest, even but a wisp of hay under
 thy great face only,
Harvest the wheat of Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, every barbed
 spear under thee,
Harvest the maize of Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, each
 ear in its light-green sheath,
Gather the hay to its myriad mows in the odorous tranquil
 barns,
Oats to their bins, the white potato, the buckwheat of Michi-
 gan, to theirs;
Gather the cotton in Mississippi or Alabama, dig and hoard
 the golden the sweet potato of Georgia and the Carolinas,
Clip the wool of California or Pennsylvania,
Cut the flax in the Middle States, or hemp or tobacco in the
 Borders,
Pick the pea and the bean, or pull apples from the trees or
 bunches of grapes from the vines,
Or aught that ripens in all these States or North or South,
Under the beaming sun and under thee.

130

1867

1881

THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH

THERE was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain
part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning-glories, and white and
red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,¹
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter,
and the mare's foal and the cow's calf,
And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the
pond-side,
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there,
and the beautiful curious liquid,
And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all be- 10
came part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became
part of him,
Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light-yellow corn, and
the esculent roots of the garden,
And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and the fruit
afterward, and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds
by the road,
And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of
the tavern whence he had lately risen,
And the schoolmistress that pass'd on her way to the school,
And the friendly boys that pass'd, and the quarrelsome boys,
And the tidy and fresh-cheek'd girls, and the barefoot negro
boy and girl,
And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that had
conceiv'd him in her womb and birth'd him,
They gave this child more of themselves than that, 20
They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him.

The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the supper-
table,
The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown, a
wholesome odor falling off her person and clothes as she
walks by,

¹ An American flycatcher.

The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd,
 unjust,
 The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty
 lure,
 The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture,
 the yearning and swelling heart,
 Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what is real,
 the thought if after all it should prove unreal,
 The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the
 curious whether and how,
 Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and
 specks?
 Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not 30
 flashes and specks what are they?
 The streets themselves and the façades of houses, and goods
 in the windows,
 Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves, the huge cross-
 ing at the ferries,
 The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset, the
 river between,
 Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and
 gables of white or brown two miles off,
 The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide, the
 little boat slack-tow'd astern,
 The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slap-
 ping,
 The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint
 away solitary by itself, the spread of purity it lies
 motionless in,
 The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow,¹ the fragrance of salt
 marsh and shore mud,
 These became part of that child who went forth every day,
 and who now goes, and will always go forth every
 day.

1855

1871

OLD IRELAND

FAR hence amid an isle of wondrous beauty,
 Crouching over a grave an ancient sorrowful mother,
 Once a queen, now lean and tatter'd seated on the ground,
 Her old white hair drooping dishevel'd round her shoulders,
 At her feet fallen an unused royal harp,

¹ Perhaps the coot, the shearwater, or the oyster-catcher.

Long silent, she too long silent, mourning her shrouded hope
and heir,
Of all the earth her heart most full of sorrow because most
full of love.

Yet a word ancient mother,
You need crouch there no longer on the cold ground with
forehead between your knees,
O you need not sit there veil'd in your old white hair so dis- 10
hevel'd,
For know you the one you mourn is not in that grave,
It was an illusion, the son you love was not really dead,
The Lord is not dead, he is risen again young and strong in
another country,
Even while you wept there by your fallen harp by the grave,
What you wept for was translated, pass'd from the grave,
The winds favor'd and the sea sail'd it,
And now with rosy and new blood,
Moves to-day in a new country.

1861

1867

THE CITY DEAD-HOUSE

By the city dead-house by the gate,
As idly sauntering wending my way from the clangor,
I curious pause, for lo, an outcast form, a poor dead prosti-
tute brought,
Her corpse they deposit unclaim'd, it lies on the damp brick
pavement,
The divine woman, her body, I see the body, I look on it
alone,
That house once full of passion and beauty, all else I notice
not,
Nor stillness so cold, nor running water from faucet,¹ nor
odors morbidic impress me,
But the house alone—that wondrous house—that delicate
fair house—that ruin!
That immortal house more than all the rows of dwellings
ever built!
Or white-domed capitol with majestic figure surmounted, or 10
all the old high-spired cathedrals,
That little house alone more than them all—poor, desperate
house!
Fair, fearful wreck—tenement of a soul—itself a soul,

¹ An outlet with valve control.

Unclaim'd, avoided house—take one breath from my tremu-
 lous lips,
 Take one tear dropt aside as I go for thought of you,
 Dead house of love—house of madness and sin, crumbled,
 crush'd,
 House of life, erewhile talking and laughing—but ah, poor
 house, dead even then,
 Months, years, an echoing, garnish'd house—but dead, dead,
 dead.

1867

1867

THIS COMPOST¹

I

SOMETHING startles me where I thought I was safest,
 I withdraw from the still woods I loved,
 I will not go now on the pastures to walk,
 I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover
 the sea,
 I will not touch my flesh to the earth as to other flesh to
 renew me.

O how can it be that the ground itself does not sicken?
 How can you be alive you growths of spring?
 How can you furnish health you blood of herbs, roots,
 orchards, grain?
 Are they not continually putting distemper'd corpses within
 you?
 Is not every continent work'd over and over with sour dead?

10

Where have you disposed of their carcasses?
 Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations?
 Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat?
 I do not see any of it upon you to-day, or perhaps I am de-
 ceiv'd,
 I will run a furrow with my plough, I will press my spade
 through the sod and turn it up underneath,
 I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.

2

Behold this compost! behold it well!
 Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick person—
 yet behold!

¹ Agricultural term for fertilizing mixture.

The grass of spring covers the prairies,
 The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden, 20
 The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,
 The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,
 The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of
 its graves,
 The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-tree,¹
 The he-birds carol mornings and evenings while the she-birds
 sit on their nests,
 The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs,
 The new-born of animals appear, the calf is dropt from the
 cow, the colt from the mare,
 Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark green
 leaves,
 Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk, the lilacs bloom in
 the door-yards,
 The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all 30
 those strata of sour dead.

What chemistry!
 That the winds are really not infectious,
 That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of the sea
 which is so amorous after me,
 That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all over with
 its tongues,
 That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have de-
 posited themselves in it,
 That all is clean forever and forever,
 That the cool drink from the well tastes so good,
 That blackberries are so flavorful and juicy,
 That the fruits of the apple-orchard and the orange-orchard,
 that melons, grapes, peaches, plums, will none of them
 poison me,
 That when I recline on the grass I do not catch any disease, 40
 Though probably every spear of grass rises out of what was
 once a catching disease.

Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and patient,
 It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,
 It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless
 successions of diseases'd corpses,
 It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,

¹ The blackberry tree.

It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual,
sumptuous crops,
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leav-
ings from them at last.

1856

1881

TO A FOIL'D EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONNAIRE

COURAGE yet, my brother or my sister!
Keep on—Liberty is to be subserv'd whatever occurs;
That is nothing that is quell'd by one or two failures, or any
number of failures,
Or by the indifference or ingratitude of the people, or by any
unfaithfulness,
Or the show of the tushes of power, soldiers, cannon, penal
statutes.

What we believe in waits latent forever through all the con-
tinents,
Invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light,
is positive and composed, knows no discouragement,
Waiting patiently, waiting its time.

(Not songs of loyalty alone are these,
But songs of insurrection also,
For I am the sworn poet of every dauntless rebel the world
over,
And he going with me leaves peace and routine behind him,
And stakes his life to be lost at any moment.)

10

The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent ad-
vance and retreat,
The infidel triumphs, or supposes he triumphs,
The prison, scaffold, garrote, handcuffs, iron necklace and
lead-balls do their work,
The named and unnamed heroes pass to other spheres,
The great speakers and writers are exiled, they lie sick in dis-
tant lands,
The cause is asleep, the strongest throats are choked with
their own blood,
The young men droop their eyelashes toward the ground
when they meet;
But for all this Liberty has not gone out of the place, nor the
infidel enter'd into full possession.

20

When Liberty goes out of a place it is not the first to go, nor
the second or third to go,
It waits for all the rest to go, it is the last.

When there are no more memories of heroes and martyrs,
And when all life and all the souls of men and women are
discharged from any part of the earth,
Then only shall liberty or the idea of liberty be discharged
from that part of the earth,
And the infidel come into full possession.

Then courage European revolter, revoltress! ¹
For till all ceases neither must you cease.

I do not know what you are for, (I do not know what I am 30
for myself, nor what any thing is for,)
But I will search carefully for it even in being foil'd,
In defeat, poverty, misconception, imprisonment—for they
too are great.

Did we think victory great?
So it is—but now it seems to me, when it cannot be help'd,
that defeat is great,
And that death and dismay are great.

1856

1881

UNNAMED LANDS

NATIONS ten thousand years before these States, and many
times ten thousand years before these States,
Garner'd clusters of ages that men and women like us grew
up and travel'd their course and pass'd on,
What vast-built cities, what orderly republics, what pastoral
tribes and nomads,
What histories, rulers, heroes, perhaps transcending all
others,
What laws, customs, wealth, arts, traditions,
What sort of marriage, what costumes, what physiology and
phrenology,
What of liberty and slavery among them, what they thought
of death and the soul,
Who were witty and wise, who beautiful and poetic, who
brutish and undevelop'd,
Not a mark, not a record remains—and yet all remains.

¹ The feminine form was apparently first used by Whitman.
See *Oxford English Dictionary*.

O I know that those men and women were not for nothing,
any more than we are for nothing,
I know that they belong to the scheme of the world every bit
as much as we now belong to it.

10

Afar they stand, yet near to me they stand,
Some with oval countenances learn'd and calm,
Some naked and savage, some like huge collections of insects,
Some in tents, herdsmen, patriarchs, tribes, horsemen,
Some prowling through woods, some living peaceably on
farms, laboring, reaping, filling barns,
Some traversing paved avenues, amid temples, palaces, fac-
tories, libraries, shows, courts, theatres, wonderful
monuments.

Are those billions of men really gone?
Are those women of the old experience of the earth gone?
Do their lives, cities, arts, rest only with us?
Did they achieve nothing for good for themselves?

20

I believe of all those men and women that fill'd the unnamed
lands, every one exists this hour here or elsewhere, in-
visible to us,

In exact proportion to what he or she grew from in life, and
out of what he or she did, felt, became, loved, sinn'd, in
life.

I believe that was not the end of those nations or any person
of them, any more than this shall be the end of my
nation, or of me;

Of their languages, governments, marriage, literature, pro-
ducts, games, wars, manners, crimes, prisons, slaves,
heroes, poets,

I suspect their results curiously await in the yet unseen world,
counterparts of what accrued to them in the seen world,

I suspect I shall meet them there,

I suspect I shall there find each old particular of those un-
named lands.

1860

1881

SONG OF PRUDENCE

MANHATTAN'S streets I saunter'd, pondering
On Time, Space, Reality—on such as these, and abreast with
them Prudence.¹

¹ Here used, as in Emerson's essay on the subject, less for
practical judgment or caution than for philosophic wisdom.

The last explanation always remains to be made about prudence,
Little and large alike drop quietly aside from the prudence
that suits immortality.

The soul is of itself,
All verges to it, all has reference to what ensues,
All that a person does, says, thinks, is of consequence,
Not a move can a man or woman make, that affects him or
her in a day, month, any part of the direct lifetime, or
the hour of death,
But the same affects him or her onward afterward through
the indirect lifetime.

The indirect is just as much as the direct, 10
The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to
the body, if not more.

Not one word or deed, not venereal sore, discoloration,
privacy of the onanist,
Putridity of gluttons or rum-drinkers, speculation, cunning,
betrayal, murder, seduction, prostitution,
But has results beyond death as really as before death.

Charity and personal force are the only investments worth
any thing.

No specification is necessary, all that a male or female does,
that is vigorous, benevolent, clean, is so much profit to
him or her,
In the unshakable order of the universe and through the
whole scope of it forever.

Who has been wise receives interest,
Savage, felon, President, judge, farmer, sailor, mechanic,
literate, young, old, it is the same,
The interest will come round—all will come round. 20

Singly, wholly, to affect now, affected their time, will forever
affect, all of the past and all of the present and all of the
future,
All the brave actions of war and peace,
All help given to relatives, strangers, the poor, old, sorrow-
ful, young children, widows, the sick, and to shunn'd
persons,
All self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks, and saw
others fill the seats of the boats,

All offering of substance or life for the good old cause, or for
a friend's sake, or opinion's sake,
All pains of enthusiasts scoff'd at by their neighbors,
All the limitless sweet love and precious suffering of mothers,
All honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded,
All the grandeur and good of ancient nations whose frag-
ments we inherit,
All the good of the dozens of ancient nations unknown to us 30
by name, date, location,
All that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or no,
All suggestions of the divine mind of man or the divinity of
his mouth, or the shaping of his great hands,
All that is well thought or said this day on any part of the
globe, or on any of the wandering stars, or on any of the
fix'd stars, by those there as we are here,
All that is henceforth to be thought or done by you whoever
you are, or by any one,
These inure, have inured, shall inure, to the identities from
which they sprang, or shall spring.

Did you guess any thing lived only its moment?
The world does not so exist, no parts palpable or impalpable
so exist,
No consummation exists without being from some long pre-
vious consummation, and that from some other,
Without the farthest conceivable one coming a bit nearer the
beginning than any.

Whatever satisfies souls is true; 40
Prudence entirely satisfies the craving and glut of souls,
Itself only finally satisfies the soul,
The soul has that measureless pride which revolts from every
lesson but its own.

Now I breathe the word of the prudence that walks abreast
with time, space, reality,
That answers the pride which refuses every lesson but its
own.

What is prudence is indivisible,
Declines to separate one part of life from every part,
Divides not the righteous from the unrighteous or the living
from the dead,
Matches every thought or act by its correlative,
Knows no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement, 50
Knows that the young man who composedly peril'd his life

and lost it has done exceedingly well for himself without
doubt,
That he who never peril'd his life, but retains it to old age in
riches and ease, has probably achiev'd nothing for him-
self worth mentioning,
Knows that only that person has really learn'd who has
learn'd to prefer results,
Who favors body and soul the same,
Who perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct,
Who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries
nor avoids death.

1856

1881

THE SINGER IN THE PRISON

I

*O sight of pity, shame and dole!
O fearful thought—a convict soul.*

RANG the refrain along the hall, the prison,¹
Rose to the roof, the vaults of heaven above,
Pouring in floods of melody in tones so pensive sweet and
strong the like whereof was never heard,
Reaching the far-off sentry and the armed guards, who
ceas'd their pacing,
Making the hearer's pulses stop for ecstasy and awe.

2

The sun was low in the west one winter day,
When down a narrow aisle amid the thieves and outlaws of
the land,
(There by the hundreds seated, sear-faced murderers, wily 10
counterfeiters,
Gather'd to Sunday church in prison walls, the keepers
round,
Plenteous, well-armed, watching with vigilant eyes,)
Calmly a lady walk'd holding a little innocent child by either
hand,
Whom seating on their stools beside her on the platform,
She, first preluding with the instrument a low and musical
prelude,
In voice surpassing all, sang forth a quaint old hymn.

¹ Said to be based on a personal observation in a New York prison.

A soul confined by bars and bands,
Cries, help! O help! and wrings her hands,
Blinded her eyes, bleeding her breast,
Nor pardon finds, nor balm of rest.

20

Ceaseless she paces to and fro,
O heart-sick days! O nights of woe!
Nor hand of friend, nor loving face,
Nor favor comes, nor word of grace.

It was not I that sinn'd the sin,
The ruthless body dragg'd me in;
Though long I strove courageously,
The body was too much for me.

Dear prison'd soul bear up a space,
For soon or late the certain grace;
To set thee free and bear thee home,
The heavenly pardoner death shall come.

30

Convict no more, nor shame, nor dole!
Depart—a God-enfranchis'd soul!

3

The singer ceas'd,
One glance swept from her clear calm eyes o'er all those up-
turn'd faces,
Strange sea of prison faces, a thousand varied, crafty, brutal,
seam'd and beauteous faces,
Then rising, passing back along the narrow aisle between
them,
While her gown touch'd them rustling in the silence,
She vanish'd with her children in the dusk.

40

While upon all, convicts and armed keepers ere they
stirr'd,
(Convict forgetting prison, keeper his loaded pistol,)
A hush and pause fell down a wondrous minute,
With deep half-stifled sobs and sound of bad men bow'd and
moved to weeping,
And youth's convulsive breathings, memories of home,
The mother's voice in lullaby, the sister's care, the happy
childhood,
The long-pent spirit rous'd to reminiscence;
A wondrous minute then—but after in the solitary night, to
many, many there,

Years after, even in the hour of death, the sad refrain, the
tune, the voice, the words,
Resumed, the large calm lady walks the narrow aisle,
The wailing melody again, the singer in the prison sings,

50

O sight of pity, shame and dole!
O fearful thought—a convict soul.

1869

1881

WARBLE FOR LILAC-TIME

WARBLE me now for joy of lilac-time, (returning in reminis-
cence,)

Sort me O tongue and lips for Nature's sake, souvenirs of
earliest summer,

Gather the welcome signs, (as children with pebbles or
stringing shells,)

Put in April and May, the hylas croaking in the ponds, the
elastic air,

Bees, butterflies, the sparrow with its simple notes,
Blue-bird and darting swallow, nor forget the high-hole
flashing his golden wings,

The tranquil sunny haze, the clinging smoke, the vapor,
Shimmer of waters with fish in them, the cerulean above,

All that is jocund and sparkling, the brooks running,
The maple woods, the crisp February days and the sugar- 10
making,

The robin where he hops, bright-eyed, brown-breasted,
With musical clear call at sunrise, and again at sunset,
Or flitting among the trees of the apple-orchard, building the
nest of his mate,

The melted snow of March, the willow sending forth its
yellow-green sprouts,

For spring-time is here! the summer is here! and what is this
in it and from it?

Thou, soul, unloosen'd—the restlessness after I know not
what;

Come, let us lag here no longer, let us be up and away!

O if one could but fly like a bird!

O to escape, to sail forth as in a ship!

To glide with thee O soul, o'er all, in all, as a ship o'er the 20
waters;

Gathering these hints, the preludes, the blue sky, the grass,
the morning drops of dew,

The lilac-scent, the bushes with dark green heart-shaped
leaves,
Wood-violets, the little delicate pale blossoms called inno-
cence,
Samples and sorts not for themselves alone, but for their
atmosphere,
To grace the bush I love—to sing with the birds,
A warble for joy of lilac-time, returning in reminiscence.

1870

1881

OUTLINES FOR A TOMB

(*G. P., Buried 1870*)¹

I

WHAT may we chant, O thou within this tomb?
What tablets, outlines, hang for thee, O millionaire?
The life thou lived'st we know not,
But that thou walk'dst thy years in barter, 'mid the haunts of
brokers,
Nor heroism thine, nor war, nor glory.

2

Silent, my soul,
With drooping lids, as waiting, ponder'd,
Turning from all the samples, monuments of heroes.

While through the interior vistas,
Noiseless uprose, phantasmic, (as by night Auroras of the 10
north,)
Lambent tableaux, prophetic, bodiless scenes,
Spiritual projections.

In one, among the city streets a laborer's home appear'd,
After his day's work done, cleanly, sweet-air'd, the gaslight
burning,
The carpet swept and a fire in the cheerful stove.

In one, the sacred parturition scene,
A happy painless mother birth'd a perfect child.

In one, at a bounteous morning meal,
Sat peaceful parents with contented sons.

¹ George Peabody, the philanthropist. He died in London, 14th November 1869, but was buried in Massachusetts, February 1870.

In one, by twos and threes, young people,
Hundreds concentrating, walk'd the paths and streets and roads,
Toward a tall-domed school.

20

In one a trio beautiful,
Grandmother, loving daughter, loving daughter's daughter,
 sat,
Chatting and sewing.

In one, along a suite of noble rooms,
'Mid plenteous books and journals, paintings on the walls,
 fine statuettes,
Were groups of friendly journeymen, mechanics young and
 old,
Reading, conversing.

All, all the shows of laboring life,
City and country, women's, men's and children's,
Their wants provided for, hued in the sun and tinged for once
 with joy,
Marriage, the street, the factory, farm, the house-room,
 lodging-room,
Labor and toil, the bath, gymnasium, playground, library,
 college,
The student, boy or girl, led forward to be taught,
The sick cared for, the shoeless shod, the orphan father'd and
 mother'd,
The hungry fed, the houseless housed;
(The intentions perfect and divine,
The workings, details, haply human.)

30

3

O thou within this tomb,
From thee such scenes, thou stintless, lavish giver,
Tallying the gifts of earth, large as the earth,
Thy name an earth, with mountains, fields and tides.

40

Nor by your streams alone, you rivers,
By you, your banks Connecticut,
By you and all your teeming life old Thames,
By you Potomac laving the ground Washington trod, by you
 Patapsco,¹
You Hudson, you endless Mississippi—nor you alone,
But to the high seas launch, my thought, his memory.

1870

1881

¹ A river in Maryland.

OUT FROM BEHIND THIS MASK

(*To Confront a Portrait*)¹

I

OUT from behind this bending rough-cut mask,
These lights and shades, this drama of the whole,
This common curtain of the face contain'd in me for me, in
 you for you, in each for each,
(Tragedies, sorrows, laughter, tears—O heaven!
The passionate teeming plays this curtain hid!)
This glaze of God's serenest purest sky,
This film of Satan's seething pit,
This heart's geography's map, this limitless small continent,
 this soundless sea;
Out from the convolutions of this globe,
This subtler astronomic orb than sun or moon, than Jupiter, 10
 Venus, Mars,
This condensation of the universe, (nay here the only universe,
Here the idea, all in this mystic handful wrapt;)
These burin'd eyes, flashing to you to pass to future time,
To launch and spin through space revolving sideling, from
 these to emanate,
To you whoe'er you are—a look.

2

A traveler of thoughts and years, of peace and war,
Of youth long sped and middle age declining,
(As the first volume of a tale perused and laid away, and this
 the second,
Songs, ventures, speculations, presently to close,) 20
Lingering a moment here and now, to you I opposite turn,
As on the road or at some crevice door by chance, or open'd
 window,
Pausing, inclining, baring my head, you specially I greet,
To draw and clinch your soul for once inseparably with mine,
Then travel travel on.

1876

1881

¹ Whitman's own portrait, illustrating 'The Wound-Dresser,' in the 1876 edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

VOCALISM

I

VOCALISM, measure, concentration, determination, and the
divine power to speak words;
Are you full-lung'd and limber-lipp'd from long trial? from
vigorous practice? from physique?
Do you move in these broad lands as broad as they?
Come duly to the divine power to speak words?
For only at last after many years, after chastity, friendship,
procreation, prudence, and nakedness,
After treading ground and breasting river and lake,
After a loosen'd throat, after absorbing eras, temperaments,
races, after knowledge, freedom, crimes,
After complete faith, after clarifyings, elevations, and re-
moving obstructions,
After these and more, it is just possible there comes to a man,
a woman, the divine power to speak words;
Then toward that man or that woman swiftly hasten all— 10
none refuse, all attend,
Armies, ships, antiquities, libraries, paintings, machines,
cities, hate, despair, amity, pain, theft, murder, aspira-
tion, form in close ranks,
They debouch as they are wanted to march obediently
through the mouth of that man or that woman.

2

O what is it in me that makes me tremble so at voices?
Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her I
shall follow,
As the water follows the moon, silently, with fluid steps, any-
where around the globe.

All waits for the right voices;
Where is the practis'd and perfect organ? where is the devel-
op'd soul?
For I see every word utter'd thence has deeper, sweeter, new
sounds, impossible on less terms.

I see brains and lips closed, tympan and temples unstruck,
Until that comes which has the quality to strike and to un- 20
close,
Until that comes which has the quality to bring forth what
lies slumbering forever ready in all words.

TO HIM THAT WAS CRUCIFIED

My spirit to yours dear brother,
Do not mind because many sounding your name do not
understand you,
I do not sound your name, but I understand you,
I specify you with joy O my comrade to salute you, and to
salute those who are with you, before and since, and
those to come also,
That we all labor together transmitting the same charge and
succession,
We few equals indifferent of lands, indifferent of times,
We, enclosers of all continents, all castes, allowers of all
theologies,
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,
We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but reject
not the disputers nor any thing that is asserted,
We hear the bawling and din, we are reach'd at by divisions, 10
jealousies, recriminations on every side,
They close peremptorily upon us to surround us, my com-
rade,
Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over, journeying
up and down till we make our ineffaceable mark upon
time and the diverse eras,
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of
races, ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers as
we are.

1860

1881

YOU FELONS ON TRIAL IN COURTS

You felons on trial in courts,
You convicts in prison-cells, you sentenced assassins chain'd
and hand-cuff'd with iron,
Who am I too that I am not on trial or in prison?
Me ruthless and devilish as any, that my wrists are not
chain'd with iron, or my ankles with iron?

You prostitutes flaunting over the trottoirs or obscene in
your rooms,
Who am I that I should call you more obscene than myself?

O culpable! I acknowledge—I exposé!¹
(O admirers, praise not me—compliment not me—you make
me wince,
I see what you do not—I know what you do not.)

Inside these breast-bones I lie smutch'd and choked,
Beneath this face that appears so impassive hell's tides con-
tinually run,
Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me,
I walk with delinquents with passionate love,
I feel I am of them—I belong to those convicts and prosti-
tutes myself,
And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can I deny
myself?

1860

1867

LAWS FOR CREATIONS

LAWS for creations,
For strong artists and leaders, for fresh broods of teachers
and perfect literats for America,
For noble savans² and coming musicians.

All must have reference to the ensemble of the world, and the
compact truth of the world,
There shall be no subject too pronounced—all works shall
illustrate the divine law of indirections.

What do you suppose creation is?
What do you suppose will satisfy the soul, except to walk
free and own no superior?
What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred
ways, but that man or woman is as good as God?
And that there is no God any more divine than Yourself?
And that that is what the oldest and newest myths finally
mean?
And that you or any one must approach creations through
such laws?

1860

1871

¹ Verbal use a coinage by Whitman.

² Savants.

TO A COMMON PROSTITUTE¹

Be composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt Whitman,
liberal and lusty as Nature,
Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the leaves to
rustle for you, do my words refuse to glisten and rustle
for you.

My girl I appoint with you an appointment, and I charge you
that you make preparation to be worthy to meet me,
And I charge you that you be patient and perfect till I come.

Till then I salute you with a significant look that you do not
forget me.

1860

1860

I WAS LOOKING A LONG WHILE

I WAS looking a long while for Intentions,
For a clew to the history of the past for myself, and for these
chants—and now I have found it,
It is not in those paged fables in the libraries, (them I neither
accept nor reject,)
It is no more in the legends than in all else,
It is in the present—it is this earth to-day,
It is in Democracy—(the purport and aim of all the past,)
It is the life of one man or one woman to-day—the average
man of to-day,
It is in languages, social customs, literatures, arts,
It is in the broad show of artificial things, ships, machinery,
politics, creeds, modern improvements, and the inter-
change of nations,
All for the modern—all for the average man of to-day.

1860

1881

10

THOUGHT

OF persons arrived at high positions, ceremonies, wealth,
scholarships, and the like;
(To me all that those persons have arrived at sinks away
from them, except as it results to their bodies and souls,

¹ Whitman is reported to have said: 'It is nothing but the beautiful little idyll of the New Testament' concerning the woman taken in adultery.

So that often to me they appear gaunt and naked,
 And often to me each one mocks the others, and mocks him-
 self or herself,
 And of each one the core of life, namely happiness, is full of
 the rotten excrement of maggots,
 And often to me those men and women pass unwittingly the
 true realities of life, and go toward false realities,
 And often to me they are alive after what custom has served
 them, but nothing more,
 And often to me they are sad, hasty, unwaked sonnambules ¹
 walking the dusk.)

1860

1871

MIRACLES

WHY, who makes much of a miracle?
 As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,
 Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
 Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,
 Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge of
 the water,
 Or stand under trees in the woods,
 Or talk by day with any one I love, or sleep in the bed at night
 with any one I love,
 Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,
 Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,
 Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive of a summer fore- 10
 noon,
 Or animals feeding in the fields,
 Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,
 Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars shining so
 quiet and bright,
 Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in
 spring;
 These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,
 The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.

To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
 Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,
 Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with
 the same,
 Every foot of the interior swarms with the same. 20

¹ The spelling is probably influenced by *La Sonnambula*.
 See p. 333.

To me the sea is a continual miracle,
The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the waves—
the ships with men in them,
What stranger miracles are there?

1856

1881

SPARKLES FROM THE WHEEL

WHERE the city's ceaseless crowd moves on the livelong day,
Withdrawn I join a group of children watching, I pause
aside with them.

By the curb toward the edge of the flagging,
A knife-grinder works at his wheel sharpening a great knife,
Bending over he carefully holds it to the stone, by foot and
knee,

With measur'd tread he turns rapidly, as he presses with light
but firm hand,

Forth issue then in copious golden jets,
Sparkles from the wheel.

The scene and all its belongings, how they seize and affect me,
The sad sharp-chinn'd old man with worn clothes and broad
shoulder-band of leather,

10

Myself effusing and fluid, a phantom curiously floating, now
here absorb'd and arrested,

The group, (an unminded point set in a vast surrounding,)
The attentive, quiet children, the loud, proud, restive base of
the streets,

The low hoarse purr of the whirling stone, the light-press'd
blade,

Diffusing, dropping, sideways-darting, in tiny showers of gold,
Sparkles from the wheel.

1871

1871

TO A PUPIL

Is reform needed? is it through you?

The greater the reform needed, the greater the Personality
you need to accomplish it.

You! do you not see how it would serve to have eyes, blood,
complexion, clean and sweet?

Do you not see how it would serve to have such a body and
soul that when you enter the crowd an atmosphere of
desire and command enters with you, and every one is
impress'd with your Personality?

O the magnet! the flesh over and over!

Go, dear friend, if need be give up all else, and commence
to-day to inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem,
definiteness, elevatedness,

Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your own Per-
sonality.

1860

1860

UNFOLDED OUT OF THE FOLDS

UNFOLDED out of the folds of the woman man comes un-
folded, and is always to come unfolded,

Unfolded only out of the superbest woman of the earth is to
come the superbest man of the earth,

Unfolded out of the friendliest woman is to come the friend-
liest man,

Unfolded only out of the perfect body of a woman can a man
be form'd of perfect body,

Unfolded only out of the inimitable poems of woman can come
the poems of man, (only thence have my poems come;)

Unfolded out of the strong and arrogant woman I love, only
thence can appear the strong and arrogant man I love,

Unfolded by brawny embraces from the well-muscled woman
I love, only thence come the brawny embraces of the
man,

Unfolded out of the folds of the woman's brain come all the
folds of the man's brain, duly obedient,

Unfolded out of the justice of the woman all justice is un-
folded,

Unfolded out of the sympathy of the woman is all sympathy; 10

A man is a great thing upon the earth and through eternity,
but every jot of the greatness of man is unfolded out of
woman;

First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then be shaped
in himself.

1856

1871

WHAT AM I AFTER ALL

WHAT am I after all but a child, pleas'd with the sound of my
own name? repeating it over and over;

I stand apart to hear—it never tires me.

To you your name also;

Did you think there was nothing but two or three pronun-
ciations in the sound of your name?

1860

1867

KOSMOS

Who includes diversity and is Nature,
Who is the amplitude of the earth, and the coarseness and
sexuality of the earth, and the great charity of the earth,
and the equilibrium also,
Who has not look'd forth from the windows the eyes for
nothing, or whose brain held audience with messengers
for nothing,
Who contains believers and disbelievers, who is the most
majestic lover,
Who holds duly his or her triune proportion of realism,
spiritualism, and of the aesthetic or intellectual,
Who having consider'd the body finds all its organs and parts
good,
Who, out of the theory of the earth and of his or her body
understands by subtle analogies all other theories,
The theory of a city, a poem, and of the large politics of these
States;
Who believes not only in our globe with its sun and moon,
but in other globes with their suns and moons,
Who, constructing the house of himself or herself, not for a
day but for all time, sees races, eras, dates, generations,
The past, the future, dwelling there, like space, inseparable
together.

1860

1867

OTHERS MAY PRAISE WHAT THEY LIKE

OTHERS may praise what they like;
But I, from the banks of the running Missouri, praise nothing
in art or aught else,
Till it has well inhaled the atmosphere of this river, also the
western prairie-scent,
And exudes it all again.

1865

1881

WHO LEARNS MY LESSON COMPLETE?

Who learns my lesson complete?
Boss, journeyman, apprentice, churchman and atheist,
The stupid and the wise thinker, parents and offspring, mer-
chant, clerk,¹ porter and customer,
Editor, author, artist, and schoolboy—draw nigh and com-
mence;

¹ An assistant in a shop.

It is no lesson—it lets down the bars to a good lesson,
And that to another, and every one to another still.

The great laws take and effuse without argument,
I am of the same style, for I am their friend,
I love them quits and quits,¹ I do not halt and make salaams.

I lie abstracted and hear beautiful tales of things and the
reasons of things,
They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.

I cannot say to any person what I hear—I cannot say it to
myself—it is very wonderful.

It is no small matter, this round and delicious globe moving
so exactly in its orbit for ever and ever, without one jolt
or the untruth of a single second,
I do not think it was made in six days, nor in ten thousand
years, nor ten billions of years,
Nor plann'd and built one thing after another as an architect
plans and builds a house.

I do not think seventy years is the time of a man or woman,
Nor that seventy millions of years is the time of a man or
woman,
Nor that years will ever stop the existence of me, or any one
else.

Is it wonderful that I should be immortal? as every one is
immortal;

I know it is wonderful, but my eyesight is equally wonderful,
and how I was conceived in my mother's womb is
equally wonderful,

And pass'd from a babe in the creeping trance of a couple of
summers and winters to articulate and walk—all this is
equally wonderful.

And that my soul embraces you this hour, and we affect each
other without ever seeing each other, and never perhaps
to see each other, is every bit as wonderful.

And that I can think such thoughts as these is just as wonder-
ful,

And that I can remind you, and you think them and know
them to be true, is just as wonderful.

¹ As an equal.

And that the moon spins round the earth and on with the
earth, is equally wonderful,
And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars is
equally wonderful.

1855

1867

TESTS

ALL submit to them where they sit, inner, secure, unap-
proachable to analysis in the soul,
Not traditions, not the outer authorities are the judges,
They are the judges of outer authorities and of all traditions,
They corroborate as they go only whatever corroborates
themselves, and touches themselves;
For all that, they have it forever in themselves to corroborate
far and near without one exception.

1860

1860

THE TORCH

ON my Northwest coast in the midst of the night a fisher-
men's group stands watching,
Out on the lake that expands before them, others are spear-
ing salmon,
The canoe, a dim shadowy thing, moves across the black water,
Bearing a torch ablaze at the prow.

1865

1867

O STAR OF FRANCE

1870-1

O STAR of France,
The brightness of thy hope and strength and fame,
Like some proud ship that led the fleet so long,
Beseems to-day a wreck driven by the gale, a mastless hulk,
And 'mid its teeming madden'd half-drown'd crowds,
Nor helm nor helmsman.

Dim smitten star,
Orb not of France alone, pale symbol of my soul, its dearest
hopes,
The struggle and the daring, rage divine for liberty,
Of aspirations toward the far ideal, enthusiast's dreams of
brotherhood,
Of terror to the tyrant and the priest.

10

Star crucified—by traitors sold,
Star panting o'er a land of death, heroic land,
Strange, passionate, mocking, frivolous land.

Miserable! yet for thy errors, vanities, sins, I will not now
 rebuke thee,
Thy unexampled woes and pangs have quell'd them all,
And left thee sacred.

In that amid thy many faults thou ever aimedst highly,
In that thou wouldst not really sell thyself however great the
 price,

In that thou surely wakedst weeping from thy drugg'd sleep, 20
In that alone among thy sisters thou, giantess, didst rend the
 ones that shamed thee,

In that thou couldst not, wouldst not, wear the usual chains,
This cross, thy livid face, thy pierced hands and feet,
The spear thrust in thy side.

O star! O ship of France, beat back and baffled long!
Bear up O smitten orb! O ship continue on!

Sure as the ship of all, the Earth itself,
Product of deathly fire and turbulent chaos,
Forth from its spasms of fury and its poisons,
Issuing at last in perfect power and beauty, 30
Onward beneath the sun following its course,
So thee O ship of France!

Finish'd the days, the clouds dispel'd,
The travail o'er, the long-sought extrication,
When lo! reborn, high o'er the European world,
(In gladness answering thence, as face afar to face, reflecting
 ours Columbia,)

Again thy star O France, fair lustrous star,
In heavenly peace, clearer, more bright than ever,
Shall beam immortal.

1871

1881

THE OX-TAMER

IN a far-away northern county in the placid pastoral region,
Lives my farmer friend, the theme of my recitative, a famous
 tamer of oxen,
There they bring him the three-year-olds and the four-year-
 olds to break them,

He will take the wildest steer in the world and break him and
 tame him,
 He will go fearless without any whip where the young bullock
 chafes up and down the yard,
 The bullock's head tosses restless high in the air with raging
 eyes,
 Yet see you! how soon his rage subsides—how soon this
 tamer tames him;
 See you! on the farms hereabouts a hundred oxen young and
 old, and he is the man who has tamed them,
 They all know him, all are affectionate to him;
 See you! some are such beautiful animals, so lofty look- 10
 ing;
 Some are buff-color'd, some mottled, one has a white line
 running along his back, some are brindled,
 Some have wide flaring horns (a good sign)—see you! the
 bright hides,
 See, the two with stars on their foreheads—see, the round
 bodies and broad backs,
 How straight and square they stand on their legs—what fine
 sagacious eyes!
 How they watch their tamer—they wish him near them—
 how they turn to look after him!
 What yearning expression! how uneasy they are when he
 moves away from them;
 Now I marvel what it can be he appears to them, (books,
 politics, poems, depart—all else departs,)
 I confess I envy only his fascination—my silent, illiterate
 friend,
 Whom a hundred oxen love there in his life on farms,
 In the northern country far, in the placid pastoral region. 20
 1874 1881

AN OLD MAN'S THOUGHT OF SCHOOL

*For the Inauguration of a Public School, Camden, New
 Jersey, 1874¹*

An old man's thought of school,
 An old man gathering youthful memories and blooms that
 youth itself cannot.

Now only do I know you,
 O fair auroral skies—O morning dew upon the grass!

¹ Recited by Whitman at the Cooper Public School.

And these I see, these sparkling eyes,
These stores of mystic meaning, these young lives,
Building, equipping like a fleet of ships, immortal ships,
Soon to sail out over the measureless seas,
On the soul's voyage.

Only a lot of boys and girls?
Only the tiresome spelling, writing, ciphering classes?
Only a public school?

Ah more, infinitely more;
(As George Fox rais'd his warning cry, 'Is it this pile of
brick and mortar, these dead floors, windows, rails, you
call the church?)

Why this is not the church at all—the church is living, ever
living souls.)

And you America,
Cast you the real reckoning for your present?
The lights and shadows of your future, good or evil?
To girlhood, boyhood look, the teacher and the school.

1874

1881

WANDERING AT MORN¹

WANDERING at morn,
Emerging from the night from gloomy thoughts, thee in my
thoughts,
Yearning for thee harmonious Union! thee, singing bird divine!
Thee coil'd in evil times my country, with craft and black
dismay, with every meanness, treason thrust upon thee,
This common marvel I beheld—the parent thrush I watch'd
feeding its young,
The singing thrush whose tones of joy and faith ecstatic,
Fail not to certify and cheer my soul.

There ponder'd, felt I,
If worms, snakes, loathsome grubs, may to sweet spiritual
songs be turn'd,
If vermin so transposed, so used and bless'd may be,
Then may I trust in you, your fortunes, days, my country;
Who knows but these may be the lessons fit for you?
From these your future song may rise with joyous trills,
Destin'd to fill the world.

1873

1881

¹ Original title, *The Singing Thrush*.

ITALIAN MUSIC IN DAKOTA

(*'The Seventeenth—the finest Regimental Band I ever heard.'*)

THROUGH the soft evening air enwinding all,
Rocks, woods, fort, cannon, pacing sentries, endless wilds,
In dulcet streams, in flutes' and cornets' notes,
Electric, pensive, turbulent, artificial,
(Yet strangely fitting even here, meanings unknown before,
Subtler than ever, more harmony, as if born here, related
here,
Not to the city's fresco'd rooms, not to the audience of the
opera house,
Sounds, echoes, wandering strains, as really here at home,
Sonnambula's innocent love, trios with *Norma's* anguish,
And thy ecstatic chorus *Poliuto*;) 10
Ray'd in the limpid yellow slanting sundown,
Music, Italian music in Dakota.

While Nature, sovereign of this gnarl'd realm,
Lurking in hidden barbaric grim recesses,
Acknowledging rapport however far remov'd,
(As some old root or soil of earth its last-born flower or fruit,)
Listens well pleas'd.

1881

1881

WITH ALL THY GIFTS

WITH all thy gifts America,
Standing secure, rapidly tending, overlooking the world,
Power, wealth, extent, vouchsafed to thee—with these and
like of these vouchsafed to thee,
What if one gift thou lackest? (the ultimate human problem
never solving,)
The gift of perfect women fit for thee—what if that gift of
gifts thou lackest?
The towering feminine of thee? the beauty, health, comple-
tion, fit for thee?
The mothers fit for thee?

1876

1881

MY PICTURE-GALLERY¹

IN a little house keep I pictures suspended, it is not a fix'd
house,
It is round, it is only a few inches from one side to the other;
Yet behold, it has room for all the shows of the world, all
memories!
Here the tableaux of life, and here the groupings of death;
Here, do you know this? this is cicerone himself,
With finger rais'd he points to the prodigal pictures.

c. 1850

1881

THE PRAIRIE STATES

A NEWER garden of creation, no primal solitude,
Dense, joyous, modern, populous millions, cities and farms,
With iron interlaced, composite, tied, many in one,
By all the world contributed—freedom's and law's and
thrift's society,
The crown and teeming paradise, so far, of time's accumula-
tions,
To justify the past.

1880

1881

Proud Music of the Storm

I

PROUD music of the storm,
Blast that careers so free, whistling across the prairies,
Strong hum of forest tree-tops—wind of the mountains,
Personified dim shapes—you hidden orchestras,
You serenades of phantoms with instruments alert,
Bending with Nature's rhythmus all the tongues of nations;
You chords left as by vast composers—you choruses,
You formless, free, religious dances—you from the Orient,
You undertone of rivers, roar of pouring cataracts,
You sounds from distant guns with galloping cavalry,

10

¹ This poem on memories is part of a much longer MS., *Pictures*, which was published in New York and London, 1927, edited by the present editor.

Echoes of camps with all the different bugle-calls,
Trooping tumultuous, filling the midnight late, bending me
powerless,
Entering my lonesome slumber-chamber, why have you
seiz'd me?

2

Come forward O my soul, and let the rest retire,
Listen, lose not, it is toward thee they tend,
Parting the midnight, entering my slumber-chamber,
For thee they sing and dance O soul.

A festival song,
The duet of the bridegroom and the bride, a marriage-
march,
With lips of love, and hearts of lovers fill'd to the brim with love, 20
The red-flush'd cheeks and perfumes, the cortege swarming
full of friendly faces young and old,
To flutes' clear notes and sounding harps' cantabile.

Now loud approaching drums,
Victoria! see'st thou in powder-smoke the banners torn but
flying? the rout of the baffled?
Hearest those shouts of a conquering army?

(Ah soul, the sobs of women, the wounded groaning in
agony,
The hiss and crackle of flames, the blacken'd ruins, the em-
bers of cities,
The dirge and desolation of mankind.)

Now airs antique and mediaeval fill me,
I see and hear old harpers with their harps at Welsh festivals, 30
I hear the minnesingers singing their lays of love,
I hear the minstrels, gleemen, troubadours, of the middle
ages.

Now the great organ sounds,
Tremulous, while underneath, (as the hid footholds of the
earth,
On which arising rest, and leaping forth depend,
All shapes of beauty, grace and strength, all hues we know,
Green blades of grass and warbling birds, children that gam-
bol and play, the clouds of heaven above,)
The strong base stands, and its pulsations intermits not,

Bathing, supporting, merging all the rest, maternity of all the
rest,

And with it every instrument in multitudes,
The players playing, all the world's musicians,
The solemn hymns and masses rousing adoration,
All passionate heart-chants, sorrowful appeals,
The measureless sweet vocalists of ages,
And for their solvent setting earth's own diapason,
Of winds and woods and mighty ocean waves,
A new composite orchestra, binder of years and climes, ten-
fold renewer,
As of the far-back days the poets tell, the Paradiso,
The straying thence, the separation long, but now the wan-
dering done,
The journey done, the journeyman come home,
And man and art with Nature fused again.

Tutti! for earth and heaven;
(The Almighty leader now for once has signal'd with his
wand.)

The manly strophe of the husbands of the world,
And all the wives responding.

The tongues of violins,
(I think O tongues ye tell this heart, that cannot tell itself,
This brooding yearning heart, that cannot tell itself.)

3

Ah from a little child,
Thou knowest soul how to me all sounds became music,
My mother's voice in lullaby or hymn,
(The voice, O tender voices, memory's loving voices,
Last miracle of all, O dearest mother's, sister's, voices;)
The rain, the growing corn, the breeze among the long-
leav'd corn,
The measur'd sea-surf beating on the sand,
The twittering bird, the hawk's sharp scream,
The wild-fowl's notes at night as flying low migrating north
or south,
The psalm in the country church or mid the clustering trees,
the open air camp-meeting,
The fiddler in the tavern, the glee, the long-strung sailor-
song,
The lowing cattle, bleating sheep, the crowing cock at dawn.

All songs of current lands come sounding round me,
The German airs of friendship, wine and love,
Irish ballads, merry jigs and dances, English warbles,
Chansons of France, Scotch tunes, and o'er the rest,
Italia's peerless compositions.

Across the stage with pallor on her face, yet lurid passion,
Stalks Norma brandishing the dagger in her hand.

I see poor crazed Lucia's eyes' unnatural gleam,
Her hair down her back falls loose and dishevel'd.

I see where Ernani walking the bridal garden,
Amid the scent of night-roses, radiant, holding his bride by
the hand,
Hears the infernal call, the death-pledge of the horn.

80

To crossing swords and gray hairs bared to heaven,
The clear electric base and baritone of the world,
The trombone duo, Libertad forever!

From Spanish chestnut trees' dense shade,
By old and heavy convent walls a wailing song,
Song of lost love, the torch of youth and life quench'd in
despair,
Song of the dying swan, Fernando's heart is breaking.

Awaking from her woes at last retriev'd Amina sings,
Copious as stars and glad as morning light the torrents of her
joy.

90

(The teeming lady comes,
The lustrous orb, Venus contralto, the blooming mother,
Sister of loftiest gods, Alboni's self I hear.)

4

I hear those odes, symphonies, operas,
I hear in the *William Tell* the music of an arous'd and angry
people,
I hear Meyerbeer's *Huguenots*, the *Prophet*, or *Robert*,
Gounod's *Faust*, or Mozart's *Don Juan*.

I hear the dance-music of all nations,
The waltz, some delicious measure, lapsing, bathing me in
bliss,
The bolero to tinkling guitars and clattering castanets.

100

I see religious dances old and new,
 I hear the sound of the Hebrew lyre,
 I see the crusaders marching bearing the cross on high, to the
 martial clang of cymbals,
 I hear dervishes monotonously chanting, interspers'd with
 frantic shouts, as they spin around turning always to-
 wards Mecca,
 I see the rapt religious dances of the Persians and the Arabs,
 Again, at Eleusis, home of Ceres, I see the modern Greeks
 dancing,
 I hear them clapping their hands as they bend their bodies,
 I hear the metrical shuffling of their feet.

I see again the wild old Corybantic dance, the performers 110
 wounding each other,
 I see the Roman youth to the shrill sound of flageolets throw-
 ing and catching their weapons,
 As they fall on their knees and rise again.

I hear from the Mussulman mosque the muezzin calling,
 I see the worshippers within, nor form nor sermon, argument
 nor word,
 But silent, strange, devout, rais'd glowing heads, ecstatic
 faces.

I hear the Egyptian harp of many strings,
 The primitive chants of the Nile boatmen,
 The sacred imperial hymns of China,
 To the delicate sounds of the king, (the stricken wood and
 stone,)

Or to Hindu flutes and the fretting twang of the vina,¹ 120
 A band of bayaderes.²

5

Now Asia, Africa leave me, Europe seizing inflates me,
 To organs huge and bands I hear as from vast concourses of
 voices,
 Luther's strong hymn *Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*,
 Rossini's *Stabat Mater dolorosa*,
 Or floating in some high cathedral dim with gorgeous color'd
 windows,
 The passionate *Agnus Dei* or *Gloria in Excelsis*.

¹ Originally a harp of seven strings.

² Female religious dancers of India.

Composers! mighty maestros!
And you, sweet singers of old lands, soprani, tenori, bassi!
To you a new bard caroling in the West,
Obeisant sends his love.

130

(Such led to thee O soul,
All senses, shows and objects, lead to thee,
But now it seems to me sound leads o'er all the rest.)

I hear the annual singing of the children in St. Paul's
cathedral,
Or, under the high roof of some colossal hall, the sym-
phonies, oratorios of Beethoven, Handel, or Haydn,
The *Creation* in billows of godhood laves me.

Give me to hold all sounds, (I madly struggling cry,)
Fill me with all the voices of the universe,
Endow me with their throbbings, Nature's also,
The tempests, waters, winds, operas and chants, marches and
dances,
Utter, pour in, for I would take them all!

140

6

Then I woke softly,
And pausing, questioning awhile the music of my dream,
And questioning all those reminiscences, the tempest in its
fury,
And all the songs of sopranos and tenors,
And those rapt oriental dances of religious fervor,
And the sweet varied instruments, and the diapason of
organs,
And all the artless complaints of love and grief and death,
I said to my silent curious soul out of the bed of the slumber-
chamber,

150

Come, for I have found the clew I sought so long,
Let us go forth refresh'd amid the day,
Cheerfully tallying life, walking the world, the real,
Nourish'd henceforth by our celestial dream.

And I said, moreover,
Haply what thou hast heard O soul was not the sound of
winds,
Nor dream of raging storm, nor sea-hawk's flapping wings
nor harsh scream,
Nor vocalism of sun-bright Italy,
Nor German organ majestic, nor vast concourse of voices,
nor layers of harmonies,

Nor strophes of husbands and wives, nor sound of marching 160
soldiers,
Nor flutes, nor harps, nor the bugle-calls of camps,
But to a new rhythmus fitted for thee,
Poems bridging the way from Life to Death, vaguely wafted
in night air, uncaught, unwritten,
Which let us go forth in the bold day and write.

1868

1881

Passage to India

I

SINGING my days,
Singing the great achievements of the present,
Singing the strong light works of engineers,
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven out-
vied,)
In the Old World the east the Suez canal,
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,
The seas inland with eloquent gentle wires;
Yet first to sound, and ever sound, the cry with thee O soul,
The Past! the Past! the Past!

The Past—the dark unfathom'd retrospect! 10
The teeming gulf—the sleepers and the shadows!
The past—the infinite greatness of the past!
For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?
(As a projectile form'd, impell'd, passing a certain line, still
keeps on,
So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past.)

2

Passage O soul to India!
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.

Not you alone proud truths of the world,
Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,
But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables, 20
The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,
The deep diving bibles and legends,
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;

O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the rising sun!
 O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of the
 known, mounting to heaven!
 You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as roses, bur-
 nish'd with gold!
 Towers of fables immortal fashion'd from mortal dreams!
 You too I welcome and fully the same as the rest!
 You too with joy I sing.

Passage to India!

Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?
 The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,
 The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,
 The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
 The lands to be welded together.

A worship new I sing,
 You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours,
 You engineers, you architects, machinists, yours,
 You, not for trade or transportation only,
 But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul.

3

Passage to India!

Lo soul for thee of tableaux twain,
 I see in one the Suez canal initiated, open'd,
 I see the procession of steamships, the Empress Eugenie's¹
 leading the van,
 I mark from on deck the strange landscape, the pure sky, the
 level sand in the distance,
 I pass swiftly the picturesque groups, the workmen gather'd,
 The gigantic dredging machines.

In one again, different, (yet thine, all thine, O soul, the same,)
 I see over my own continent the Pacific railroad surmounting
 every barrier,
 I see continual trains of cars winding along the Platte² carry-
 ing freight and passengers,
 I hear the locomotives rushing and roaring, and the shrill
 steam-whistle,

¹ Probably the Swedish frigate *L'Eugénie*, which in 1851-3 sailed around the world on a Franco-Swedish scientific expedition.

² The rivers, plains, mountains, and lakes mentioned are all on the route of the Union Pacific Railway from Omaha to San Francisco.

I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest scenery in
 the world,
 I cross the Laramie plains, I note the rocks in grotesque
 shapes, the buttes,
 I see the plentiful larkspur and wild onions, the barren,
 colorless, sage-deserts,
 I see in glimpses afar or towering immediately above me the
 great mountains, I see the Wind river and the Wahsatch
 mountains,
 I see the Monument mountain and the Eagle's Nest, I pass
 the Promontory, I ascend the Nevadas,
 I scan the noble Elk mountain and wind around its base,
 I see the Humboldt range, I thread the valley and cross the
 river,
 I see the clear waters of lake Tahoe, I see forests of majestic
 pines,
 Or crossing the great desert, the alkaline plains, I behold en- 60
 chanting mirages of waters and meadows,
 Marking through these and after all, in duplicate slender
 lines,
 Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,
 Tying the Eastern to the Western sea,
 The road between Europe and Asia.

(Ah Genoese¹ thy dream! thy dream!
 Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,
 The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream.)

4

Passage to India!
 Struggles of many a captain, tales of many a sailor dead,
 Over my mood stealing and spreading they come, 70
 Like clouds and cloudlets in the unreach'd sky.

Along all history, down the slopes,
 As a rivulet running, sinking now, and now again to the sur-
 face rising,
 A ceaseless thought, a varied train—lo, soul, to thee, thy
 sight, they rise,
 The plans, the voyages again, the expeditions;
 Again Vasco de Gama sails forth,
 Again the knowledge gain'd, the mariner's compass,
 Lands found and nations born, thou born America,
 For purpose vast, man's long probation fill'd,
 Thou rondure of the world at last accomplish'd. 80

¹ Columbus.

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,
 Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,
 Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,
 Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and count-
 less stars above,
 Below, the manifold grass and waters, animals, mountains,
 trees,
 With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention,
 Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.

Down from the gardens of Asia descending radiating,
 Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after
 them,
 Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations,
 With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-
 happy hearts,
 With that sad incessant refrain, *Wherefore unsatisfied soul?*
 and *Whither O mocking life?*

90

Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?
 Who justify these restless explorations?
 Who speak the secret of impassive earth?
 Who bind it to us? what is this separate Nature so unnatural?
 What is this earth to our affections? (unloving earth, without
 a throb to answer ours,
 Cold earth, the place of graves.)

Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be carried
 out,
 Perhaps even now the time has arrived.

100

After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,)
 After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd
 their work,
 After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the chemist, the
 geologist, ethnologist,
 Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,
 The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

Then not your deeds only O voyagers, O scientists and in-
 ventors, shall be justified,
 All these hearts as of fretted children shall be sooth'd,
 All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret shall be
 told,
 All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook'd
 and link'd together,

The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth, shall 110
be completely justified,
Trinitas divine shall be gloriously accomplish'd and com-
pacted by the true son of God, the poet,
(He shall indeed pass the straits and conquer the mountains,
He shall double the cape of Good Hope to some purpose,)
Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more,
The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them.

6

Year at whose wide-flung door I sing!
Year of the purpose accomplish'd!
Year of the marriage of continents, climates and oceans!
(No mere doge of Venice now wedding the Adriatic,)
I see O year in you the vast terraqueous globe given and 120
giving all,
Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New World,
The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding a festi-
val garland,
As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand.

Passage to India!
Cooling airs from Caucasus, far, soothing cradle of man,
The river Euphrates flowing, the past lit up again.

Lo soul, the retrospect brought forward,
The old, most populous, wealthiest of earth's lands,
The streams of the Indus and the Ganges and their many
affluents,
(I my shores of America walking to-day behold, resuming all,) 130
The tale of Alexander on his warlike marches suddenly dying,
On one side China and on the other side Persia and Arabia,
To the south the great seas and the bay of Bengal,
The flowing literatures, tremendous epics, religions, castes,
Old occult Brahma interminably far back, the tender and
junior Buddha,
Central and southern empires and all their belongings, pos-
sessors,
The wars of Tamerlane, the reign of Aurungzebe,
The traders, rulers, explorers, Moslems, Venetians, Byzan-
tium, the Arabs, Portuguese,
The first travelers famous yet, Marco Polo, Batouta the Moor,¹

¹ Ibn Batuta (Abn Abdallah Mohammed), a geographer
whose *Travels* was translated into English in 1823.

Doubts to be solv'd, the map incognita,¹ blanks to be fill'd, 140
The foot of man unstay'd, the hands never at rest,
Thyself O soul that will not brook a challenge.

The mediaeval navigators rise before me,
The world of 1492, with its awaken'd enterprise,
Something swelling in humanity now like the sap of the earth
in spring,
The sunset splendor of chivalry declining.

And who art thou sad shade?
Gigantic, visionary, thyself a visionary,
With majestic limbs and pious beaming eyes,
Spreading around with every look of thine a golden world, 150
Enhuing it with gorgeous hues.

As the chief histrion,
Down to the footlights walks in some great scena,
Dominating the rest I see the Admiral himself,²
(History's type of courage, action, faith,)
Behold him sail from Palos leading his little fleet,
His voyage behold, his return, his great fame,
His misfortunes, calumniators, behold him a prisoner,
chain'd,
Behold his dejection, poverty, death.

(Curious in time I stand, noting the efforts of heroes, 160
Is the deferment long? bitter the slander, poverty, death?
Lies the seed unreck'd for centuries in the ground? lo, to
God's due occasion,
Uprising in the night, it sprouts, blooms,
And fills the earth with use and beauty.)

7

Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
The young maturity of brood and bloom,
To realms of budding bibles.

O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,
Thy circumnavigation of the world begin, 170

¹ On ancient maps unexplored regions were labelled *terra incognita*.

² Columbus.

Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,
To reason's early paradise,
Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
Again with fair creation.

8

O we can wait no longer,
We too take ship O soul,
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,
Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to sail,
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to
me, O soul,) 180
Caroling free, singing our song of God,
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

With laugh and many a kiss,
(Let others deprecate, let others weep for sin, remorse,
humiliation,)
O soul thou pleasest me, I thee.

Ah more than any priest O soul we too believe in God,
But with the mystery of God we dare not dally.

O soul thou pleasest me, I thee,
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like
waters flowing,
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite, 190
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,
Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of
them,
Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving,
Thou moral, spiritual fountain—affection's source—thou
reservoir,
(O pensive soul of me—O thirst unsatisfied—waitest not
there?)

Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the Comrade per- 200
fect?)

Thou pulse—thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,

How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak,
if, out of myself,
I could not launch, to those, superior universes?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual Me,
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

210

Greater than stars or suns,
Bounding O soul thou journeyest forth;
What love than thine and ours could wider amplify?
What aspirations, wishes, outvie thine and ours O soul?
What dreams of the ideal? what plans of purity, perfection,
strength,
What cheerful willingness for others' sake to give up all?
For others' sake to suffer all?

Reckoning ahead O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,
The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done,
Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim attain'd,
As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother
found,
The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

220

9

Passage to more than India!
Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights?
O soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyages like those?
Disportest thou on waters such as those?
Soundest below the Sanscrit and the Vedas?
Then have thy bent unleash'd.

Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas!
Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling problems!
You, strew'd with the wrecks of skeletons, that, living, never
reach'd you.

230

Passage to more than India!
O secret of the earth and sky!
Of you O waters of the sea! O winding creeks and rivers!
Of you O woods and fields! of you strong mountains of my
land!

Of you O prairies! of you gray rocks!
O morning red! O clouds! O rain and snows!
O day and night, passage to you!

O sun and moon and all you stars! Sirius and Jupiter!
Passage to you!

240

Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins!
Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!
Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?
Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking
like mere brutes?
Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long
enough?

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

250

O my brave soul!
O farther farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail!

1868

1871

Prayer of Columbus

A BATTER'D, wreck'd old man,
Thrown on this savage shore, far, far from home,
Pent by the sea and dark rebellious brows, twelve dreary
months,
Sore, stiff with many toils, sicken'd and nigh to death,
I take my way along the island's¹ edge,
Venting a heavy heart.

I am too full of woe!
Haply I may not live another day;
I cannot rest O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep,
Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee,

10

¹ Jamaica, in the West Indies.

Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune with
Thee,
Report myself once more to Thee.

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,
My long and crowded life of active work, not adoration
merely;

Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth,
Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary medi-
tations,

Thou knowest how before I commenced I devoted all to
come to Thee,

Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows and
strictly kept them,

Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy in
Thee,

In shackles, prison'd, in disgrace, repining not,
Accepting all from Thee, as duly come from Thee.

20

All my emprises¹ have been fill'd with Thee,
My speculations, plans, begun and carried on in thought of
Thee,

Sailing the deep or journeying the land for Thee;
Intentions, purports, aspirations mine, leaving results to Thee.

O I am sure they really came from Thee,
The urge, the ardor, the unconquerable will,
The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words,
A message from the Heavens whispering to me even in sleep,
These sped me on.

30

By me and these the work so far accomplish'd,
By me earth's elder cloy'd and stifled lands, uncloy'd, unloos'd,
By me the hemispheres rounded and tied, the unknown to the
known.

The end I know not, it is all in Thee,
Or small or great I know not—haply what broad fields, what
lands,

Haply the brutish measureless human undergrowth I know,
Transplanted there may rise to stature, knowledge worthy
Thee,

Haply the swords I know may there indeed be turn'd to
reaping-tools,

Haply the lifeless cross I know, Europe's dead cross, may
bud and blossom there.

¹ Enterprises, adventures.

One effort more, my altar this bleak sand;
That Thou O God my life hast lighted,
With ray of light, steady, ineffable, vouchsafed of Thee,
Light rare untellable, lighting the very light,
Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages;
For that O God, be it my latest word, here on my knees,
Old, poor, and paralyzed, I thank Thee.

40

My terminus near,
The clouds already closing in upon me,
The voyage balk'd, the course disputed, lost,
I yield my ships to Thee.

50

My hands, my limbs, grow nerveless,
My brain feels rack'd, bewilder'd,
Let the old timbers part, I will not part,
I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves buffet me,
Thee, Thee at least I know.

Is it the prophet's thought I speak, or am I raving?
What do I know of life? what of myself?
I know not even my own work past or present,
Dim ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,
Of newer better worlds, their mighty parturition,
Mocking, perplexing me.

60

And these things I see suddenly, what mean they?
As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes,
Shadowy vast shapes smile through the air and sky,
And on the distant waves sail countless ships,
And anthems in new tongues I hear saluting me.

1874

1881

The Sleepers

I

I WANDER all night in my vision,
Stepping with light feet, swiftly and noiselessly stepping and
stopping,
Bending with open eyes over the shut eyes of sleepers,
Wandering and confused, lost to myself, ill-assorted, con-
tradictory,
Pausing, gazing, bending, and stopping.

How solemn they look there, stretch'd and still,
How quiet they breathe, the little children in their cradles.

The wretched features of ennuyés, the white features of
corpses, the livid faces of drunkards, the sick-gray faces
of onanists,

The gash'd bodies on battle-fields, the insane in their strong-
door'd rooms, the sacred idiots, the new-born emerging
from gates, and the dying emerging from gates,

The night pervades them and infolds them.

10

The married couple sleep calmly in their bed, he with his
palm on the hip of the wife, and she with her palm on
the hip of the husband,

The sisters sleep lovingly side by side in their bed,

The men sleep lovingly side by side in theirs,

And the mother sleeps with her little child carefully wrapt.

The blind sleep, and the deaf and dumb sleep,

The prisoner sleeps well in the prison, the runaway son
sleeps,

The murderer that is to be hung next day, how does he sleep?

And the murder'd person, how does he sleep?

The female that loves unrequited sleeps,

And the male that loves unrequited sleeps,

The head of the money-maker that plotted all day sleeps,

And the enraged and treacherous dispositions, all, all sleep.

20

I stand in the dark with drooping eyes by the worst-suffering
and the most restless,

I pass my hands soothingly to and fro a few inches from
them,

The restless sink in their beds, they fitfully sleep.

Now I pierce the darkness, new beings appear,

The earth recedes from me into the night,

I saw that it was beautiful, and I see that what is not the
earth is beautiful.

I go from bedside to bedside, I sleep close with the other
sleepers each in turn,

I dream in my dream all the dreams of the other dreamers,

And I become the other dreamers.

30

I am a dance—play up there! the fit is whirling me fast!

I am the ever-laughing—it is new moon and twilight,
I see the hiding of douceurs, I see nimble ghosts whichever
way I look,
Cache and cache again deep in the ground and sea, and where
it is neither ground nor sea.

Well do they do their jobs those journeymen divine,
Only from me can they hide nothing, and would not if they
could,
I reckon I am their boss and they make me a pet besides,
And surround me and lead me and run ahead when I walk,
To lift their cunning covers to signify me with stretch'd arms,
and resume the way;
Onward we move, a gay gang of blackguards! with mirth-
shouting music and wild-flapping pennants of joy!

I am the actor, the actress, the voter, the politician,
The emigrant and the exile, the criminal that stood in the box,
He who has been famous and he who shall be famous after
to-day,
The stammerer, the well-formed person, the wasted or feeble
person.

I am she who adorn'd herself and folded her hair expectantly,
My truant lover has come, and it is dark.

Double yourself and receive me darkness,
Receive me and my lover too, he will not let me go without
him.

I roll myself upon you as upon a bed, I resign myself to the
dusk.

He whom I call answers me and takes the place of my lover,
He rises with me silently from the bed.

Darkness, you are gentler than my lover, his flesh was sweaty
and panting,
I feel the hot moisture yet that he left me.

My hands are spread forth, I pass them in all directions,
I would sound up the shadowy shore to which you are jour-
neying.

Be careful darkness! already what was it touch'd me?
I thought my lover had gone, else darkness and he are one,
I hear the heart-beat, I follow, I fade away.

I descend my western course, my sinews are flaccid,
 Perfume and youth course through me and I am their wake.

60

It is my face yellow and wrinkled instead of the old woman's,
 I sit low in a straw-bottom chair and carefully darn my
 grandson's stockings.

It is I too, the sleepless widow looking out on the winter
 midnight,
 I see the sparkles of starshine on the icy and pallid earth.

A shroud I see and I am the shroud, I wrap a body and lie in
 the coffin,
 It is dark here under ground, it is not evil or pain here, it is
 blank here, for reasons.

(It seems to me that every thing in the light and air ought to
 be happy,
 Whoever is not in his coffin and the dark grave let him know
 he has enough.)

I see a beautiful gigantic swimmer swimming naked through
 the eddies of the sea,
 His brown hair lies close and even to his head, he strikes out
 with courageous arms, he urges himself with his legs,
 I see his white body, I see his undaunted eyes,
 I hate the swift-running eddies that would dash him head-
 foremost on the rocks.

70

What are you doing you ruffianly red-trickled waves?
 Will you kill the courageous giant? will you kill him in the
 prime of his middle age?

Steady and long he struggles,
 He is baffled, bang'd, bruis'd, he holds out while his strength
 holds out,
 The slapping eddies are spotted with his blood, they bear him
 away, they roll him, swing him, turn him,
 His beautiful body is borne in the circling eddies, it is con-
 tinually bruis'd on rocks,
 Swiftly and out of sight is borne the brave corpse.

80

I turn but do not extricate myself,
Confused, a past-reading, another, but with darkness yet.

The beach is cut by the razory ice-wind, the wreck-guns¹
sound,
The tempest lulls, the moon comes floundering through the
drifts.

I look where the ship helplessly heads end on, I hear the
burst as she strikes, I hear the howls of dismay, they
grow fainter and fainter.

I cannot aid with my wringing fingers,
I can but rush to the surf and let it drench me and freeze upon
me.

I search with the crowd, not one of the company is wash'd to
us alive,
In the morning I help pick up the dead and lay them in rows
in a barn.

5

Now of the older war-days, the defeat at Brooklyn,²
Washington stands inside the lines, he stands on the in-
trench'd hills amid a crowd of officers,
His face is cold and damp, he cannot repress the weeping
drops,
He lifts the glass perpetually to his eyes, the color is blanch'd
from his cheeks,
He sees the slaughter of the southern braves confided to him
by their parents.

The same at last and at last when peace is declared,
He stands in the room of the old tavern, the well-belov'd
soldiers all pass through,
The officers speechless and slow draw near in their turns,
The chief encircles their necks with his arm and kisses them
on the cheek,
He kisses lightly the wet cheeks one after another, he shakes
hands and bids good-by to the army.

¹ A memory of the wreck of the ship *Mexico*, off Hempstead Beach, 1840.

² See *The Centenarian's Story*, p. 248.

Now what my mother told me one day as we sat at dinner together, 100

Of when she was a nearly grown girl living home with her parents on the old homestead.

A red squaw¹ came one breakfast-time to the old homestead,
On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rush-bottom-
ing chairs,

Her hair, straight, shiny, coarse, black, profuse, half-en-
velop'd her face,

Her step was free and elastic, and her voice sounded ex-
quisitely as she spoke.

My mother looked in delight and amazement at the stranger,
She look'd at the freshness of her tall-borne face and full and
pliant limbs,

The more she look'd upon her she loved her,
Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and purity.

She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace, she 110
cook'd food for her,

She had no work to give her, but she gave her remembrance
and fondness.

The red squaw staid all the forenoon, and toward the middle
of the afternoon she went away,

O my mother was loth to have her go away,
All the week she thought of her, she watch'd for her many a
month,

She remember'd her many a winter and many a summer,
But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again.

A show of the summer softness—a contact of something un-
seen—an amour of the light and air,

I am jealous and overwhelm'd with friendliness,
And will go gallivant with the light and air myself.

O love and summer, you are in the dreams and in me, 120
Autumn and winter are in the dreams, the farmer goes with
his thrift,

The droves and crops increase, the barns are well-fill'd.

¹ An American Indian woman.

Elements merge in the night, ships make tacks in the dreams,
 The sailor sails, the exile returns home,
 The fugitive returns unharm'd, the immigrant is back beyond
 months and years,
 The poor Irishman lives in the simple house of his childhood
 with the well-known neighbors and faces,
 They warmly welcome him, he is barefoot again, he forgets
 he is well off,
 The Dutchman voyages home, and the Scotchman and
 Welshman voyage home, and the native of the Mediter-
 ranean voyages home,
 To every port of England, France, Spain, enter well-fill'd
 ships,
 The Swiss foots it toward his hills, the Prussian goes his way, 130
 the Hungarian his way, and the Pole his way,
 The Swede returns, and the Dane and Norwegian return.

The homeward bound and the outward bound,
 The beautiful lost swimmer, the ennuyé, the onanist, the
 female that loves unrequited, the money-maker,
 The actor and actress, those through with their parts and
 those waiting to commence,
 The affectionate boy, the husband and wife, the voter, the
 nominee that is chosen and the nominee that has fail'd,
 The great already known and the great any time after to-day,
 The stammerer, the sick, the perfect-form'd, the homely,
 The criminal that stood in the box, the judge that sat and
 sentenced him, the fluent lawyers, the jury, the audience,
 The laughter and weeper, the dancer, the midnight widow, the
 red squaw,
 The consumptive, the erysipalite,¹ the idiot, he that is wrong'd, 140
 The antipodes, and every one between this and them in the
 dark,
 I swear they are averaged now—one is no better than the other,
 The night and sleep have liken'd them and restored them.

I swear they are all beautiful,
 Every one that sleeps is beautiful, every thing in the dim light
 is beautiful,
 The wildest and bloodiest is over, and all is peace.

Peace is always beautiful,
 The myth of heaven indicates peace and night.

¹ A victim of erysipelas; Whitman's coinage.

The myth of heaven indicates the soul,
The soul is always beautiful, it appears more or it appears 150
less, it comes or it lags behind,
It comes from its embower'd garden and looks pleasantly on
itself and encloses the world,
Perfect and clean the genitals previously jetting, and perfect
and clean the womb cohering,
The head well-grown proportion'd and plumb, and the
bowels and joints proportion'd and plumb.

The soul is always beautiful,
The universe is duly in order, every thing is in its place,
What has arrived is in its place and what waits shall be in its
place,
The twisted skull waits, the watery or rotten blood waits,
The child of the glutton or venerealee waits long, and the
child of the drunkard waits long, and the drunkard him-
self waits long,
The sleepers that lived and died wait, the far advanced are to
go on in their turns, and the far behind are to come on in
their turns,
The diverse shall be no less diverse, but they shall flow and 160
unite—they unite now.

8

The sleepers are very beautiful as they lie unclothed,
They flow hand in hand over the whole earth from east to
west as they lie unclothed,
The Asiatic and African are hand in hand, the European and
American are hand in hand,
Learn'd and unlearn'd are hand in hand, and male and fe-
male are hand in hand,
The bare arm of the girl crosses the bare breast of her lover,
they press close without lust, his lips press her neck,
The father holds his grown or ungrown son in his arms
with measureless love, and the son holds the father in
his arms with measureless love,
The white hair of the mother shines on the white wrist of the
daughter,
The breath of the boy goes with the breath of the man, friend
is inarm'd by friend,
The scholar kisses the teacher and the teacher kisses the
scholar, the wrong'd is made right,
The call of the slave is one with the master's call, and the 170
master salutes the slave,

The felon steps forth from the prison, the insane becomes
sane, the suffering of sick persons is reliev'd,
The sweatings and fevers stop, the throat that was unsound is
sound, the lungs of the consumptive are resumed, the
poor distress'd head is free,
The joints of the rheumatic move as smoothly as ever, and
smoother than ever,
Stiflings and passages open, the paralyzed become supple,
They swell'd and convuls'd and congested awake to them-
selves in condition,
They pass the invigoration of the night and the chemistry of
the night, and awake.

I too pass from the night,
I stay a while away O night, but I return to you again and
love you.

Why should I be afraid to trust myself to you?
I am not afraid, I have been well brought forward by you, 180
I love the rich running day, but I do not desert her in whom I
lay so long,
I know not how I came of you and I know not where I go
with you, but I know I came well and shall go well.

I will stop only a time with the night, and rise betimes,
I will duly pass the day O my mother, and duly return to you.
1855 1881

TRANSPPOSITIONS¹

LET the reformers descend from the stands where they are
forever bawling—let an idiot or insane person appear on
each of the stands;
Let judges and criminals be transposed—let the prison-
keepers be put in prison—let those that were prisoners
take the keys;
Let them that distrust birth and death lead the rest.
1856 1881

¹ Part of a much longer poem, the satirical *Respondez*,
dropped in the 1881 edition.

To Think of Time

I

To think of time—of all that retrospection,
To think of to-day, and the ages continued henceforward.

Have you guess'd you yourself would not continue?
Have you dreaded these earth-beetles?
Have you fear'd the future would be nothing to you?

Is to-day nothing? is the beginningless past nothing?
If the future is nothing they are just as surely nothing.

To think that the sun rose in the east—that men and women
were flexible, real, alive—that every thing was alive,
To think that you and I did not see, feel, think, nor bear our
part,
To think that we are now here and bear our part.

10

2

Not a day passes, not a minute or second without an ac-
couchement,
Not a day passes, not a minute or second without a corpse.

The dull nights go over and the dull days also,
The soreness of lying so much in bed goes over,
The physician after long putting off gives the silent and ter-
rible look for an answer,
The children come hurried and weeping, and the brothers
and sisters are sent for,
Medicines stand unused on the shelf, (the camphor-smell has
long pervaded the rooms,)
The faithful hand of the living does not desert the hand of the
dying,
The twitching lips press lightly on the forehead of the dying,
The breath ceases and the pulse of the heart ceases,
The corpse stretches on the bed and the living look upon it,
It is palpable as the living are palpable.

20

The living look upon the corpse with their eyesight,
But without eyesight lingers a different living and looks
curiously on the corpse.

To think the thought of death merged in the thought of materials,

To think of all these wonders of city and country, and others taking great interest in them, and we taking no interest in them.

To think how eager we are in building our houses,

To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite indifferent.

(I see one building the house that serves him a few years, or seventy or eighty years at most,

I see one building the house that serves him longer than that.) 30

Slow-moving and black lines creep over the whole earth—they never cease—they are the burial lines,

He that was President was buried, and he that is now President shall surely be buried.

4

A reminiscence of the vulgar fate,

A frequent sample of the life and death of workmen,

Each after his kind.

Cold dash of waves at the ferry-wharf, posh and ice in the river, half-frozen mud in the streets,

A gray discouraged sky overhead, the short last daylight of December,

A hearse and stages, the funeral of an old Broadway stage-driver, the cortege mostly drivers.¹

Steady the trot to the cemetery, duly rattles the death-bell,

The gate is pass'd, the new-dug grave is halted at, the living alight, the hearse uncloses, 40

The coffin is pass'd out, lower'd and settled, the whip is laid on the coffin, the earth is swiftly shovel'd in,

The mound above is flatted with the spades—silence,

A minute—no one moves or speaks—it is done,

He is decently put away—is there any thing more?

He was a good fellow, free-mouth'd, quick-temper'd, not bad-looking,

Ready with life or death for a friend, fond of women, gambled, ate hearty, drank hearty,

¹ Whitman was the boon companion of many such men, and once supported the family of a disabled driver by operating his stage-coach for him.

Had known what it was to be flush, grew low-spirited toward
the last, sicken'd, was help'd by a contribution,
Died, aged forty-one years—and that was his funeral.

Thumb extended, finger uplifted, apron, cape, gloves, strap,
wet-weather clothes, whip carefully chosen,
Boss, spotter, starter, hostler, somebody loafing¹ on you, you
loafing on somebody, headway, man before and man
behind,
Good day's work, bad day's work, pet stock, mean stock,²
first out, last out, turning-in at night,
To think that these are so much and so nigh to other drivers,
and he there takes no interest in them.

50

5

The markets, the government, the working-man's wages, to
think what account they are through our nights and days,
To think that other working-men will make just as great
account of them, yet we make little or no account.

The vulgar and the refined, what you call sin and what you
call goodness, to think how wide a difference,
To think the difference will still continue to others, yet we lie
beyond the difference.

To think how much pleasure there is,
Do you enjoy yourself in the city? or engaged in business? or
planning a nomination and election? or with your wife
and family?

Or with your mother and sisters? or in womanly housework?
or the beautiful maternal cares?

These also flow onward to others, you and I flow onward,
But in due time you and I shall take less interest in them.

60

Your farm, profits, crops—to think how engross'd you are,
To think there will still be farms, profits, crops, yet for you of
what avail?

6

What will be will be well, for what is is well,
To take interest is well, and not to take interest shall be well.

The domestic joys, the daily housework or business, the
building of houses, are not phantasms, they have weight,
form, location,

¹ Idling; here, delaying traffic by driving slowly.

² Horses.

Farms, profits, crops, markets, wages, government, are none
of them phantasms,

The difference between sin and goodness is no delusion,
The earth is not an echo, man and his life and all the things of
his life are well-consider'd.

You are not thrown to the winds, you gather certainly and 70
safely around yourself,

Yourself! yourself! yourself, for ever and ever!

7

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother
and father, it is to identify you,

It is not that you should be undecided, but that you should
be decided,

Something long preparing and formless is arrived and form'd
in you,

You are henceforth secure, whatever comes or goes.

The threads that were spun are gather'd, the weft crosses the
warp, the pattern is systematic.

The preparations have every one been justified,
The orchestra have sufficiently tuned their instruments, the
baton has given the signal.

The guest that was coming, he waited long, he is now housed,
He is one of those who are beautiful and happy, he is one of 80
those that to look upon and be with is enough.

The law of the past cannot be eluded,
The law of the present and future cannot be eluded,
The law of the living cannot be eluded, it is eternal,
The law of promotion and transformation cannot be eluded,
The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be eluded,
The law of drunkards, informers, mean persons, not one iota
thereof can be eluded.

8

Slow moving and black lines go ceaselessly over the earth,¹
Northerner goes carried and Southerner goes carried, and
they on the Atlantic side and they on the Pacific,
And they between, and all through the Mississippi country,
and all over the earth.

¹ Funeral processions.

The great masters and kosmos are well as they go, the heroes 90
and good-doers are well,
The known leaders and inventors and the rich owners and
pious and distinguish'd may be well,
But there is more account than that, there is strict account of
all.

The interminable hordes of the ignorant and wicked are not
nothing,
The barbarians of Africa and Asia are not nothing,
The perpetual successions of shallow people are not nothing
as they go.

Of and in all these things,
I have dream'd that we are not to be changed so much, nor
the law of us changed,
I have dream'd that heroes and good-doers shall be under the
present and past law,
And that murderers, drunkards, liars, shall be under the
present and past law,
For I have dream'd that the law they are under now is 100
enough.

And I have dream'd that the purpose and essence of the
known life, the transient,
Is to form and decide identity for the unknown life, the per-
manent.

If all came but to ashes of dung,
If maggots and rats ended us, then Alarum! for we are be-
tray'd,
Then indeed suspicion of death.

Do you suspect death? if I were to suspect death I should die
now,
Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited toward
annihilation?

Pleasantly and well-suited I walk,
Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good,
The whole universe indicates that it is good, 110
The past and the present indicate that it is good.

How beautiful and perfect are the animals!
How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon it!
What is called good is perfect, and what is called bad is just
as perfect,

The vegetables and minerals are all perfect, and the imponderable fluids perfect;
Slowly and surely they have pass'd on to this, and slowly and surely they yet pass on.

9

I swear I think now that every thing without exception has an eternal soul!

The trees have, rooted in the ground! the weeds of the sea have! the animals!

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!

That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is for it, and the cohering is for it! 120

And all preparation is for it—and identity is for it—and life and materials are altogether for it!

1855

1881

Whispers of Heavenly Death

DAREST THOU NOW O SOUL

DAREST thou now O soul,
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?

No map there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

I know it not O soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land.

Till when the ties loosen, 10
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil O soul.

1868

1881

WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH

WHISPERS of heavenly death murmur'd I hear,
Labial gossip of night, sibilant chorals,
Footsteps gently ascending, mystical breezes wafted soft and
low,
Ripples of unseen rivers, tides of a current flowing, forever
flowing,
(Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of
human tears?)

I see, just see skyward, great cloud-masses,
Mournfully slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing,
With at times a half-dimm'd sadden'd far-off star,
Appearing and disappearing.

(Some parturition rather, some solemn immortal birth;
On the frontiers to eyes impenetrable,
Some soul is passing over.)

1868

1871

10

CHANTING THE SQUARE DEIFIC

I

CHANTING the square deific, out of the One advancing, out of
the sides,
Out of the old and new, out of the square entirely divine,
Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed,) from this side Jeho-
vah am I,
Old Brahm I, and I Saturnius am;
Not Time affects me—I am Time, old, modern as any,
Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments,
As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos, with laws,
Aged beyond computation, yet ever new, ever with those
mighty laws rolling,
Relentless I forgive no man—whoever sins dies—I will have
that man's life;
Therefore let none expect mercy—have the seasons, gravita-
tion, the appointed days, mercy? no more have I,
But as the seasons and gravitation, and as all the appointed
days that forgive not,
I dispense from this side judgments inexorable without the
least remorse.

10

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,
 With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,
 Foretold by prophets and poets in their most rapt prophecies
 and poems,
 From this side, lo! the Lord Christ gazes—lo! Hermes I—
 lo! mine is Hercules' face,
 All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in my-
 self,
 Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison, and
 crucified, and many times shall be again,
 All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and sis-
 ters' sake, for the soul's sake,
 Wending my way through the homes of men, rich or poor, 20
 with the kiss of affection,
 For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing God, with hope
 and all-enclosing charity,
 With indulgent words as to children, with fresh and sane
 words, mine only,
 Young and strong I pass knowing well I am destin'd myself
 to an early death;
 But my charity has no death—my wisdom dies not, neither
 early nor late,
 And my sweet love bequeath'd here and elsewhere never
 dies.

3

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,
 Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,
 Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,
 With sudra¹ face and worn brow, black, but in the depths of
 my heart, proud as any,
 Lifted now and always against whoever scorning assumes to 30
 rule me,
 Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences, brooding, with
 many wiles,
 (Though it was thought I was baffled and dispel'd, and my
 wiles done, but that will never be,)
 Defiant, I, Satan, still live, still utter words, in new lands duly
 appearing, (and old ones also,)
 Permanent here from my side, warlike, equal with any, real
 as any,
 Nor time nor change shall ever change me or my words.

¹ Lowest of the four original Hindoo castes.

Santa Spirita,¹ breather, life,
 Beyond the light, lighter than light,
 Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,
 Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,
 Including all life on earth, touching, including God, includ- 40
 ing Saviour and Satan,
 Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all? what
 were God?)
 Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent, posi-
 tive, (namely the unseen,)
 Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man,
 I, the general soul,
 Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,
 Breathe my breath also through these songs.

1865-6

1881

OF HIM I LOVE DAY AND NIGHT

Of him I love day and night I dream'd I heard he was dead,
 And I dream'd I went where they had buried him I love, but
 he was not in that place,
 And I dream'd I wander'd searching among burial-places to
 find him,
 And I found that every place was a burial-place;
 The houses full of life were equally full of death, (this house
 is now,)
 The streets, the shipping, the places of amusement, the Chi-
 cago, Boston, Philadelphia, the Mannahatta, were as
 full of the dead as of the living,
 And fuller, O vastly fuller of the dead than of the living;
 And what I dream'd I will henceforth tell to every person and
 age,
 And I stand henceforth bound to what I dream'd,
 And now I am willing to disregard burial-places and dis- 10
 pense with them,
 And if the memorials of the dead were put up indifferently
 everywhere, even in the room where I eat or sleep, I
 should be satisfied,

¹ A Whitman coinage.

And if the corpse of any one I love, or if my own corpse, be
duly render'd to powder and pour'd in the sea, I shall be
satisfied,¹

Or if it be distributed to the winds I shall be satisfied.

1871

1871

YET, YET, YE DOWNCAST HOURS

YET, yet, ye downcast hours, I know ye also,
Weights of lead, how ye clog and cling at my ankles,
Earth to a chamber of mourning turns—I hear the o'er-
weening, mocking voice,
*Matter is conqueror—matter, triumphant only, continues on-
ward.*

Despairing cries float ceaselessly toward me,
The call of my nearest lover, putting forth, alarm'd, un-
certain,
*The sea I am quickly to sail, come tell me,
Come tell me where I am speeding, tell me my destination.*

I understand your anguish, but I cannot help you,
I approach, hear, behold, the sad mouth, the look out of the 10
eyes, your mute inquiry,
Whither I go from the bed I recline on, come tell me;
Old age, alarm'd, uncertain—a young woman's voice, ap-
pealing to me for comfort;
A young man's voice, *Shall I not escape ?*

1860

1871

AS IF A PHANTOM CARESS'D ME

As if a phantom caress'd me,
I thought I was not alone walking here by the shore;
But the one I thought was with me as now I walk by the
shore, the one I loved that caress'd me,
As I lean and look through the glimmering light, that one has
utterly disappear'd,
And those appear that are hateful to me and mock me.

1860

1867

¹ About twenty years later Whitman built a substantial
burial vault for himself and his relatives.

ASSURANCES

I NEED no assurances, I am a man who is pre-occupied of his own soul;
I do not doubt that from under the feet and beside the hands and face I am cognizant of, are now looking faces I am not cognizant of, calm and actual faces,
I do not doubt but the majesty and beauty of the world are latent in any iota of the world,
I do not doubt I am limitless, and that the universes are limitless, in vain I try to think how limitless,
I do not doubt that the orbs and the systems of orbs play their swift sports through the air on purpose, and that I shall one day be eligible to do as much as they, and more than they,
I do not doubt that temporary affairs keep on and on millions of years,
I do not doubt interiors have their interiors, and exteriors have their exteriors, and that the eyesight has another eyesight, and the hearing another hearing, and the voice another voice,
I do not doubt that the passionately-wept deaths of young men are provided for, and that the deaths of young women and the deaths of little children are provided for, (Did you think Life was so well provided for, and Death, the purport of all Life, is not well provided for?)
I do not doubt that wrecks at sea, no matter what the horrors of them, no matter whose wife, child, husband, father, lover, has gone down, are provided for, to the minutest points,
I do not doubt that whatever can possibly happen anywhere at any time, is provided for in the inherences of things,
I do not think Life provides for all and for Time and Space, but I believe Heavenly Death provides for all.

1856

1871

10

QUICKSAND YEARS

QUICKSAND years that whirl me I know not whither,
Your schemes, politics, fail, lines give way, substances mock and elude me,
Only the theme I sing, the great and strong-possess'd soul, eludes not,

One's-self must never give way—that is the final substance—
that out of all is sure,
Out of politics, triumphs, battles, life, what at last finally
remains?
When shows break up what but One's-Self is sure?

1861-2

1867

THAT MUSIC ALWAYS ROUND ME

THAT music always round me, unceasing, unbeginning, yet
long untaught I did not hear,
But now the chorus I hear and am elated,
A tenor, strong, ascending with power and health, with glad
notes of daybreak I hear,
A soprano at intervals sailing buoyantly over the tops of im-
mense waves,
A transparent base shuddering lusciously under and through
the universe,
The triumphant tutti, the funeral wailings with sweet flutes
and violins, all these I fill myself with,
I hear not the volumes of sound merely, I am moved by the
exquisite meanings,
I listen to the different voices winding in and out, striving,
contending with fiery vehemence to excel each other in
emotion;
I do not think the performers know themselves—but now I
think I begin to know them.

1860

1867

WHAT SHIP PUZZLED AT SEA

WHAT ship puzzled at sea, cons for the true reckoning?
Or coming in, to avoid the bars and follow the channel a
perfect pilot needs?
Here, sailor! here, ship! take aboard the most perfect pilot,
Whom, in a little boat, putting off and rowing, I hailing you
offer.

1860

1881

A NOISELESS PATIENT SPIDER

A NOISELESS patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launched forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres
to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor
hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my
soul.

10

1862-3

1881

O LIVING ALWAYS, ALWAYS DYING

O LIVING always, always dying!
O the burials of me past and present,
O me while I stride ahead, material, visible, imperious as
ever;
O me, what I was for years, now dead, (I lament not, I am
content;)
O to disengage myself from those corpses of me, which I turn
and look at where I cast them,
To pass on, (O living! always living!) and leave the corpses
behind.

1860

1867

TO ONE SHORTLY TO DIE

FROM all the rest I single out you, having a message for you,
You are to die—let others tell you what they please, I cannot
prevaricate,
I am exact and merciless, but I love you—there is no escape
for you.

Softly I lay my right hand upon you, you just feel it,
I do not argue, I bend my head close and half envelop it,
I sit quietly by, I remain faithful,
I am more than nurse, more than parent or neighbor,
I absolve you from all except yourself spiritual bodily, that is
eternal, you yourself will surely escape,
The corpse you will leave will be but excrementitious.

The sun bursts through in unlooked-for directions,
Strong thoughts fill you and confidence, you smile,
You forget you are sick, as I forget you are sick,

10

You do not see the medicines, you do not mind the weeping
friends, I am with you,
I exclude others from you, there is nothing to be commiser-
ated,
I do not commiserate, I congratulate you.

1860

1871

NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIES

NIGHT on the prairies,
The supper is over, the fire on the ground burns low,
The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapt in their blankets;
I walk by myself—I stand and look at the stars, which I think
now I never realized before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,
I admire death and test propositions.

How plenteous! how spiritual! how résumé! ¹
The same old man and soul—the same old aspirations, and
the same content.

I was thinking the day most splendid till I saw what the not-
day exhibited,
I was thinking this globe enough till there sprang out so
noiseless around me myriads of other globes.

10

Now while the great thoughts of space and eternity fill me I
will measure myself by them,
And now touch'd with the lives of other globes arrived as far
along as those of the earth,
Or waiting to arrive, or pass'd on farther than those of the
earth,
I henceforth no more ignore them than I ignore my own life,
Or the lives of the earth arrived as far as mine, or waiting to
arrive.

O I see now that life cannot exhibit all to me, as the day can-
not,
I see that I am to wait for what will be exhibited by death.

1860

1871

¹ Recapitulatory.

THOUGHT

As I sit with others at a great feast, suddenly while the music
is playing,
To my mind, (whence it comes I know not,) spectral in mist
of a wreck at sea,
Of certain ships, how they sail from port with flying streamers
and wafted kisses, and that is the last of them,
Of the solemn and murky mystery about the fate of the
President,¹
Of the flower of the marine science of fifty generations foun-
der'd off the Northeast coast and going down—of the
steamship Arctic going down,
Of the veil'd tableau—women gather'd together on deck,
pale, heroic, waiting the moment that draws so close—O
the moment!
A huge sob—a few bubbles—the white foam spirting up—
and then the women gone,
Sinking there while the passionless wet flows on—and I now
pondering, Are those women indeed gone?
Are souls drown'd and destroy'd so?
Is only matter triumphant?

1860

1871

10

THE LAST INVOCATION

At the last, tenderly,
From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the
well-closed doors,
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;
With the key of softness unlock the locks—with a whisper,
Set ope the doors O soul.

Tenderly—be not impatient,
(Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,
Strong is your hold O love.)

1868

1871

10

¹ American steamer which, sailing from New York for Liverpool on 21st March 1841, was sighted three days later but never again.

AS I WATCH'D THE PLOUGHMAN PLOUGHING

As I watch'd the ploughman ploughing,
Or the sower sowing in the fields, or the harvester harvesting,
I saw there too, O life and death, your analogies;
(Life, life is the tillage, and Death is the harvest according.)

1871

1871

PENSIVE AND FALTERING

PENSIVE and faltering,
The words *the Dead* I write,
For living are the Dead,
(Haply the only living, only real,
And I the apparition, I the spectre.)

1868

1871

*Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood*¹

I

THOU Mother with thy equal brood,
Thou varied chain of different States, yet one identity only,
A special song before I go I 'd sing o'er all the rest,
For thee, the future.

I 'd sow a seed for thee of endless Nationality,
I 'd fashion thy ensemble including body and soul,
I 'd show away ahead thy real Union, and how it may be
accomplish'd.

The paths to the house I seek to make,
But leave to those to come the house itself.

Belief I sing, and preparation;
As Life and Nature are not great with reference to the present only,

10

¹ Read before the United Literary Societies of Dartmouth College, 26th June, 1872.

But greater still from what is yet to come,
Out of that formula for thee I sing.

2

As a strong bird on pinions free,¹
Joyous, the amplest spaces heavenward cleaving,
Such be the thought I 'd think of thee America,
Such be the recitative I 'd bring for thee.

The conceits of the poets of other lands I 'd bring thee not,
Nor the compliments that have served their turn so long,
Nor rhyme, nor the classics, nor perfume of foreign court or 20
indoor library;
But an odor I 'd bring as from forests of pine in Maine, or
breath of an Illinois prairie,
With open airs of Virginia or Georgia or Tennessee, or from
Texas uplands, or Florida's glades,²
Or the Saguenay's³ black stream, or the wide blue spread of
Huron,
With presentment of Yellowstone's⁴ scenes, or Yosemite,⁵
And murmuring under, pervading all, I 'd bring the rustling
sea-sound,
That endlessly sounds from the two Great Seas of the world.

And for thy subtler sense subtler refrains dread Mother,
Preludes of intellect tallying these and thee, mind-formulas
fitted for thee, real and sane and large as these and thee,
Thou! mounting higher, diving deeper than we knew, thou
transcendental Union!
By thee fact to be justified, blended with thought, 30
Thought of man justified, blended with God,
Through thy idea, lo, the immortal reality!
Through thy reality, lo, the immortal ideal!

3

Brain of the New World, what a task is thine,
To formulate the Modern—out of the peerless grandeur of
the modern,

¹ This line was the original title of the poem.

² The Everglades, an immense Florida swamp.

³ Saguenay River, in Canada, which Whitman was later to visit.

⁴ Yellowstone National Park.

⁵ Yosemite Valley, in California.

Out of thyself, comprising science, to recast poems, churches,
art,
(Recast, maybe discard them, end them—maybe their work
is done, who knows?)
By vision, hand, conception, on the background of the
mighty past, the dead,
To limn with absolute faith the mighty living present.

And yet thou living present brain, hear of the dead, the Old 40
World brain,
Thou that lay folded like an unborn babe within its fold so
long,
Thou carefully prepared by it so long—haply thou but un-
folded it, only maturest it,
It to eventuate in thee—the essence of the by-gone time con-
tain'd in thee,
Its poems, churches, arts, unwitting to themselves, destined
with reference to thee;
Thou but the apples, long, long, long a-growing,
The fruit of all the Old ripening to-day in thee.

4

Sail, sail thy best, ship of Democracy,
Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the Present only,
The Past is also stored in thee,
Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone, not of the 50
Western continent alone,
Earth's *résumé* entire floats on thy keel O ship, is steadied by
thy spars,
With thee Time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations sink
or swim with thee,
With all their ancient struggles, martyrs, heroes, epics, wars,
thou bear'st the other continents,
Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the destination-port trium-
phant;
Steer then with good strong hand and wary eye O helmsman,
thou carriest great companions,
Venerable priestly Asia sails this day with thee,
And royal feudal Europe sails with thee.

5

Beautiful world of new superber birth that rises to my
eyes,
Like a limitless golden cloud filling the western sky,
Emblem of general maternity lifted above all, 60

Sacred shape of the bearer of daughters and sons,
Out of thy teeming womb thy giant babes in ceaseless procession issuing,
Acceding from such gestation, taking and giving continual strength and life,
World of the real—world of the twain in one,
World of the soul, born by the world of the real alone, led to identity, body, by it alone,
Yet in beginning only, incalculable masses of composite precious materials,
By history's cycles forwarded, by every nation, language, hither sent,
Ready, collected here, a freer, vast, electric world, to be constructed here,
(The true New World, the world of orbic science, morals, literatures to come,)
Thou wonder world yet undefined, unform'd, neither do I 70
define thee,
How can I pierce the impenetrable blank of the future?
I feel thy ominous greatness evil as well as good,
I watch thee advancing, absorbing the present, transcending the past,
I see thy light lighting, and thy shadow shadowing, as if the entire globe,
But I do not undertake to define thee, hardly to comprehend thee,
I but thee name, thee prophesy, as now,
I merely thee ejaculate!

Thee in thy future,
Thee in thy only permanent life, career, thy own unloosen'd mind, thy soaring spirit,
Thee as another equally needed sun, radiant, ablaze, swift-moving, fructifying all, 80
Thee risen in potent cheerfulness and joy, in endless great hilarity,
Scattering for good the cloud that hung so long, that weigh'd so long upon the mind of man,
The doubt, suspicion, dread, of gradual, certain decadence of man;
Thee in thy larger, saner brood of female, male—thee in thy athletes, moral, spiritual, South, North, West, East,
(To thy immortal breasts, Mother of All, thy every daughter, son, endear'd alike, forever equal,)
Thee in thy own musicians, singers, artists, unborn yet, but certain,

Thee in thy moral wealth and civilization, (until which thy
 proudest material civilization must remain in vain,)
 Thee in thy all-supplying, all-enclosing worship—thee in no
 single bible, saviour, merely,
 Thy saviours countless, latent within thyself, thy bibles in-
 cessant within thyself, equal to any, divine as any,
 (Thy soaring course thee formulating, not in thy two great 90
 wars, nor in thy century's visible growth,
 But far more in these leaves and chants, thy chants, great
 Mother!)
 Thee in an education grown of thee, in teachers, studies,
 students, born of thee,
 Thee in thy democratic fêtes en-masse, thy high original fes-
 tivals, operas, lecturers, preachers,
 Thee in thy ultimata, (the preparations only now completed,
 the edifice on sure foundations tied,)
 Thee in thy pinnacles, intellect, thought, thy topmost rational
 joys, thy love and godlike aspiration,
 In thy resplendent coming literati, thy full-lung'd orators,
 thy sacerdotal bards, kosmic savans,
 These! these in thee, (certain to come,) to-day I prophesy.

6

Land tolerating all, accepting all, not for the good alone, all
 good for thee,
 Land in the realms of God to be a realm unto thyself,
 Under the rule of God to be a rule unto thyself. 100

(Lo, where arise three peerless stars,
 To be thy natal stars my country, Ensemble, Evolution,
 Freedom,
 Set in the sky of Law.)

Land of unprecedented faith, God's faith,
 Thy soil, thy very subsoil, all upheav'd,
 The general inner earth so long so sedulously draped over,
 now hence for what it is boldly laid bare,
 Open'd by thee to heaven's light for benefit or bale.

Not for success alone,
 Not to fair-sail unintermitted always,
 The storm shall dash thy face, the murk of war and worse 110
 than war shall cover thee all over,
 (Wert capable of war, its tug and trials? be capable of peace,
 its trials,

For the tug and mortal strain of nations come at last in prosperous peace, not war;)

 In many a smiling mask death shall approach beguiling thee,

 thou in disease shalt swelter,

 The livid cancer spread its hideous claws, clinging upon thy breasts, seeking to strike thee deep within,

 Consumption of the worst, moral consumption, shall rouge thy face with hectic,

 But thou shalt face thy fortunes, thy diseases, and surmount them all,

 Whatever they are to-day and whatever through time they may be,

 They each and all shall lift and pass away and cease from thee,

 While thou, Time's spirals rounding, out of thyself, thyself still extricating, fusing,

 Equable, natural, mystical Union thou, (the mortal with immortal blent,)

 Shalt soar toward the fulfilment of the future, the spirit of the body and the mind,

 The soul, its destinies.

120

The soul, its destinies, the real real,

 (Purport of all these apparitions of the real;)

 In thee America, the soul, its destinies,

 Thou globe of globes! thou wonder nebulous!

 By many a throe of heat and cold convuls'd, (by these thyself solidifying,)

 Thou mental, moral orb—thou New, indeed new, Spiritual World!

 The Present holds thee not—for such vast growth as thine,

 For such unparallel'd flight as thine, such brood as thine,

 The FUTURE only holds thee and can hold thee.

130

1872

1881

A PAUMANOK PICTURE

Two boats with nets lying off the sea-beach, quite still,

 Ten fishermen waiting—they discover a thick school of mossbonkers¹—they drop the join'd seine-ends in the water,

 The boats separate and row off, each on its rounding course to the beach, enclosing the mossbonkers,

 The net is drawn in by a windlass by those who stop ashore,

¹ Mossbunkers or menhaden, the most common fish on the Atlantic coast of America.

Some of the fishermen lounge in their boats, others stand
ankle-deep in the water, pois'd on strong legs,
The boats partly drawn up, the water slapping against them,
Strew'd on the sand in heaps and windrows, well out from
the water, the green-back'd spotted mossbonkers.

1881

1881

From Noon to Starry Night

THOU ORB ALOFT FULL-DAZZLING

THOU orb aloft full-dazzling! thou hot October noon!
Flooding with sheeny light the gray beach sand,
The sibilant near sea with vistas far and foam,
And tawny streaks and shades and spreading blue;
O sun of noon refulgent! my special word to thee.

Hear me illustrious!

Thy lover me, for always I have loved thee,
Even as basking babe, then happy boy alone by some wood
edge, thy touching-distant beams enough,
Or man matured, or young or old, as now to thee I launch
my invocation.

(Thou canst not with thy dumbness me deceive,
I know before the fitting man all Nature yields,
Though answering not in words, the skies, trees, hear his
voice—and thou O sun,
As for thy throes, thy perturbations, sudden breaks and
shafts of flame gigantic,
I understand them, I know those flames, those perturbations
well.)

10

Thou that with fructifying heat and light,
O'er myriad farms, o'er lands and waters North and South,
O'er Mississippi's endless course, o'er Texas' grassy plains,
Kanada's woods,
O'er all the globe that turns its face to thee shining in space,
Thou that impartially infoldest all, not only continents, seas,

Thou that to grapes and weeds and little wild flowers givest
so liberally,
Shed, shed thyself on mine and me, with but a fleeting ray out
of thy million millions,
Strike though these chants.

20

Nor only launch thy subtle dazzle and thy strength for these,
Prepare the later afternoon of me myself—prepare my
lengthening shadows,
Prepare my starry nights.

1881

1881

FACES

I

SAUNTERING the pavement or riding the country by-road, lo,
such faces!

Faces of friendship, precision, caution, sauvity, ideality,
The spiritual-prescient face, the always welcome common
benevolent face,

The face of the singing of music, the grand faces of natural
lawyers and judges broad at the back-top,

The faces of hunters and fishers bulged at the brows, the
shaved blanch'd faces of orthodox citizens,

The pure, extravagant, yearning, questioning artist's face,

The ugly face of some beautiful soul, the handsome detested
or despised face,

The sacred faces of infants, the illuminated face of the mother
of many children,

The face of an amour, the face of veneration,

The face as of a dream, the face of an immobile rock,

The face withdrawn of its good and bad, a castrated face,

A wild hawk, his wings clipp'd by the clipper,

A stallion that yielded at last to the thongs and knife of the
gelder.

10

Sauntering the pavement thus, or crossing the ceaseless ferry,¹
faces and faces and faces,

I see them and complain not, and am content with all.

2

Do you suppose I could be content with all if I thought them
their own finale?

This now is too lamentable a face for a man,

¹ See *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*, p. 135.

Some abject louse asking leave to be, cringing for it,
Some milk-nosed maggot blessing what lets it wrig to its hole.

This face is a dog's snout sniffing for garbage, 20
Snakes nest in that mouth, I hear the sibilant threat.

This face is a haze more chill than the arctic sea,
Its sleepy and wobbling icebergs crunch as they go.

This is a face of bitter herbs, this an emetic, they need no
label,
And more of the drug-shelf, laudanum, caoutchouc, or hog's-
lard.

This face is an epilepsy, its wordless tongue gives out the
earthly cry,
Its veins down the neck distend, its eyes roll till they show
nothing but their whites,
Its teeth grit, the palms of the hands are cut by the turn'd-in
nails,
The man falls struggling and foaming to the ground, while he
speculates well.

This face is bitten by vermin and worms, 30
And this is some murderer's knife with a half-pull'd scabbard.

This face owes to the sexton his dismalest fee,
An unceasing death-bell tolls there.

3

Features of my equals would you trick me with your creas'd
and cadaverous march?
Well, you cannot trick me.

I see your rounded never-erased flow,
I see 'neath the rims of your haggard and mean disguises.

Splay and twist as you like, poke with the tangling fores¹ of
fishes or rats,
You 'll be unmuzzled, you certainly will.
I saw the face of the most smear'd and slobbering idiot they 40
had at the asylum,
And I knew for my consolation what they knew not,
I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my brother,

¹ Foreparts; barbels or feelers.

The same wait to clear the rubbish from the fallen tenement,
And I shall look again in a score or two of ages,
And I shall meet the real landlord perfect and unharm'd,
every inch as good as myself.

4

The Lord advances, and yet advances,
Always the shadow in front, always the reach'd hand bring-
ing up the laggards.

Out of this face emerge banners and horses—O superb! I see
what is coming,
I see the high pioneer-caps,¹ see staves of runners clearing the
way,
I hear victorious drums.

50

This face is a life-boat,
This is the face commanding and bearded, it asks no odds of
the rest,
This face is flavor'd fruit ready for eating,
This face of a healthy honest boy is the programme of all good.

These faces bear testimony slumbering or awake,
They show their descent from the Master himself.

Off the word I have spoken I except not one—red, white,
black, are all deific,
In each house is the ovum, it comes forth after a thousand
years.

Spots or cracks at the windows do not disturb me,
Tall and sufficient stand behind and make signs to me,
I read the promise and patiently wait.

60

This is a full-grown lily's face,
She speaks to the limber-hipp'd man near the garden pickets,
*Come here she blushing cries, Come nigh to me limber-
hipp'd man,*
Stand at my side till I lean as high as I can upon you,
Fill me with albescent honey, bend down to me,
*Rub to me with your chafing beard, rub to my breast and
shoulders.*

¹ Enormous bearskin caps or shakos worn by the pioneers
who led regiments in Broadway parades.

The old face of the mother of many children,
Whist! I am fully content.

Lull'd and late is the smoke of the First-day morning, 70
It hangs low over the rows of trees by the fences,
It hangs thin by the sassafras and wild-cherry and cat-brier
under them.

I saw the rich ladies in full dress at the soiree,
I heard what the singers were singing so long,
Heard who sprang in crimson youth from the white froth and
the water-blue.¹

Behold a woman!
She looks out from her quaker cap, her face is clearer and
more beautiful than the sky.

She sits in an armchair under the shaded porch of the farm-
house,
The sun just shines on her old white head.

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen, 80
Her grandsons raised the flax, and her grand-daughters spin
it with the distaff and the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth,
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go and does not
wish to go,
The justified mother of men.

1855

1881

THE MYSTIC TRUMPETER

I

HARK, some wild trumpeter, some strange musician,
Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tunes to-night.
I hear thee trumpeter, listening alert I catch thy notes,
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,
Now low, subdued, now in the distance lost.

2

Come nearer bodiless one, haply in thee resounds
Some dead composer, haply thy pensive life

¹ Aphrodite.

Was fill'd with aspirations high, uniform'd ideals,
Waves, oceans musical, chaotically surging,
That now ecstatic ghost, close to me bending, thy cornet 10
 echoing, pealing,
Gives out to no one's ears but mine, but freely gives to mine,
That I may thee translate.

3

Blow trumpeter free and clear, I follow thee,
While at thy liquid prelude, glad, serene,
The fretting world, the streets, the noisy hours of day with-
 draw,
A holy calm descends like dew upon me,
I walk in cool refreshing night the walks of Paradise,
I scent the grass, the moist air and the roses;
Thy song expands my numb'd imbonded spirit, thou freest,
 launchest me,
Floating and basking upon heaven's lake. 20

4

Blow again trumpeter! and for my sensuous eyes,
Bring the old pageants, show the feudal world.

What charm thy music works! thou makest pass before me,
Ladies and cavaliers long dead, barons are in their castle halls,
 the troubadours are singing,
Arm'd knights go forth to redress wrongs, some in quest of
 the holy Graal;
I see the tournament, I see the contestants incased in heavy
 armor seated on stately champing horses,
I hear the shouts, the sounds of blows and smiting steel;
I see the Crusaders' tumultuous armies—hark, how the cym-
 bals clang,
Lo, where the monks walk in advance, bearing the cross on
 high.

5

Blow again trumpeter! and for thy theme, 30
Take now the enclosing theme of all, the solvent and the
 setting,
Love, that is pulse of all, the sustenance and the pang,
The heart of man and woman all for love,
No other theme but love—knitting, enclosing, all-diffusing
 love.

O how the immortal phantoms crowd around me!
I see the vast alembic ever working, I see and know the flames
that heat the world,
The glow, the blush, the beating hearts of lovers,
So blissful happy some, and some so silent, dark, and nigh to
death;
Love, that is all the earth to lovers—love, that mocks time
and space,
Love, that is day and night—love, that is sun and moon and
stars,
Love, that is crimson, sumptuous, sick with perfume,
No other words but words of love, no other thought but love.

40

6

Blow again trumpeter—conjure war's alarms.

Swift to thy spell a shuddering hum like distant thunder rolls,
Lo, where the arm'd men hasten—lo, mid the clouds of dust
the glint of bayonets,
I see the grime-faced cannoneers, I mark the rosy flash amid
the smoke, I hear the cracking of the guns;
Nor war alone—thy fearful music-song, wild prayer, brings
every sight of fear,
The deeds of ruthless brigands, rapine, murder—I hear the
cries for help!
I see ships foundering at sea, I behold on deck and below
deck the terrible tableaux.

7

O trumpeter, methinks I am myself the instrument thou
playest,
Thou melt'st my heart, my brain—thou movest, drawest,
changest them at will;
And now thy sullen notes send darkness through me,
Thou takest away all cheering light, all hope,
I see the enslaved, the overthrown, the hurt, the opprest of
the whole earth,
I feel the measureless shame and humiliation of my race, it
becomes all mine,
Mine too the revenges of humanity, the wrongs of ages,
baffled feuds and hatreds,
Utter defeat upon me weighs—all lost—the foe victorious,
(Yet 'mid the ruins Pride colossal stands unshaken to the
last,
Endurance, resolution to the last.)

50

Now trumpeter for thy close,
 Vouchsafe a higher strain than any yet,
 Sing to my soul, renew its languishing faith and hope,
 Rouse up my slow belief, give me some vision of the future,
 Give me for once its prophecy and joy.

60

O glad, exulting, culminating song!
 A vigor more than earth's is in thy notes,
 Marches of victory—man disenthral'd—the conqueror at
 last,
 Hymns to the universal God from universal man—all joy!
 A reborn race appears—a perfect world, all joy!
 Women and men in wisdom innocence and health—all joy!
 Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy!
 War, sorrow, suffering gone—the rank earth purged—no-
 thing but joy left!
 The ocean fill'd with joy—the atmosphere all joy!
 Joy! joy! in freedom, worship, love! joy in the ecstasy of life!
 Enough to merely be! enough to breathe!
 Joy! joy! all over joy!

70

1872

1881

TO A LOCOMOTIVE IN WINTER

THEE for my recitative,
 Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the winter-
 day declining,
 Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual throbbing and thy
 beat convulsive,
 Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,
 Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods,
 gyrating, shuttling at thy sides,
 Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in
 the distance,
 Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,¹
 Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate
 purple,
 The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-
 stack,
 Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous
 twinkle of thy wheels,
 Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,

10

¹ The locomotives were once constructed thus.

Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily
careering;

Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse
of the continent,

For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as
here I see thee,

With storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling snow,

By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,

By night thy silent signal lamps to swing.

Fierce-throated beauty!

Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy swing-
ing lamps at night,

Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an 20
earthquake, rousing all,

Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding,
(No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano thine,)

Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,

Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,

To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.

1876

1881

O MAGNET-SOUTH

O MAGNET-SOUTH! O glistening perfumed South! my South!

O quick mettle, rich blood, impulse and love! good and evil!

O all dear to me!

O dear to me my birth-things—all moving things and the
trees where I was born—the grains, plants, rivers,

Dear to me my own slow sluggish rivers where they flow,
distant, over flats of silvery sands or through swamps,

Dear to me the Roanoke, the Savannah, the Altamahaw, the
Pedee, the Tombigbee, the Santee, the Coosa, and the
Sabine,

O pensive, far away wandering, I return with my soul to
haunt their banks again,

Again in Florida I float on transparent lakes, I float on the
Okeechobee,¹ I cross the hummock-land or through
pleasant openings or dense forests,

I see the parrots in the woods, I see the papaw-tree² and the
blossoming titi;³

Again, sailing in my coaster on deck, I coast off Georgia, I
coast up the Carolinas,

¹ A lake.

² A fruit tree.

³ Ironwood.

10

I see where the live-oak is growing, I see where the yellow-
 pine, the scented bay-tree, the lemon and orange, the
 cypress, the graceful palmetto,¹
 I pass rude sea-headlands and enter Pamlico sound through
 an inlet, and dart my vision inland;
 O the cotton plant! the growing fields of rice, sugar, hemp!
 The cactus guarded with thorns, the laurel-tree with large
 white flowers,
 The range afar, the richness and barrenness, the old woods
 charged with mistletoe and trailing moss,
 The piney odor and the gloom, the awful natural stillness,
 (here in these dense swamps the freebooter carries his
 gun, and the fugitive has his conceal'd hut;)
 O the strange fascination of these half-known half-impass-
 able swamps, infested by reptiles, resounding with the
 bellow of the alligator, the sad noises of the night-owl
 and the wild-cat, and the whirr of the rattlesnake,²
 The mocking-bird, the American mimic, singing all the fore-
 noon, singing through the moon-lit night,
 The humming-bird, the wild turkey, the raccoon,³ the
 opossum;
 A Kentucky corn-field, the tall, graceful, long-leav'd corn,
 slender, flapping, bright green, with tassels, with beauti-
 ful ears each well-sheath'd in its husk;
 O my heart! O tender and fierce pangs, I can stand them not, 20
 I will depart;
 O to be a Virginian where I grew up! ⁴ O to be a Carolinian!
 O longings irrepressible! O I will go back to old Tennessee
 and never wander more.

1860

1881

MANNAHATTA

I WAS asking for something specific and perfect for my city,
 Whereupon lo! upsprang the aboriginal name.
 Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane,
 unruly, musical, self-sufficient,
 I see that the word of my city is that word from of old,

¹ Fan palm.

² A poisonous American snake which gives warning with a rattle.

³ A small American mammal, carnivorous, and for the most part arboreal.

⁴ Though Whitman had paid one or more brief visits to the South, he here speaks, as he often does, in his character as a representative American.

Because I see that word nested in nests of water-bays, superb,
 Rich, hemm'd thick all around with sailships and steamships,
 an island sixteen miles long, solid-founded,
 Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender,
 strong, light, splendidly uprising toward clear skies,
 Tides swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown,
 The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger adjoining
 islands, the heights, the villas,
 The countless masts, the white shore-steamers, the lighters, 10
 the ferry-boats, the black sea-steamers well-model'd,
 The down-town streets, the jobbers' houses of business, the
 houses of business of the ship-merchants and money-
 brokers, the river-streets,
 Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand in a week,
 The carts hauling goods, the manly race of drivers of horses,
 the brown-faced sailors,
 The summer air, the bright sun shining, and the sailing clouds
 aloft,
 The winter snows, the sleigh-bells, the broken ice in the river,
 passing along up or down with the flood-tide or ebb-tide,
 The mechanics of the city, the masters, well-form'd, beauti-
 ful-faced, looking you straight in the eyes,
 Trottoirs throng'd, vehicles, Broadway, the women, the shops
 and shows,
 A million people—manners free and superb—open voices—
 hospitality—the most courageous and friendly young
 men,
 City of hurried and sparkling waters! city of spires and masts!
 City nested in bays! ¹ my city! 20

1860

1881

ALL IS TRUTH

O ME, man of slack faith so long,
 Standing aloof, denying portions so long,
 Only aware to-day of compact all-diffused truth,
 Discovering to-day there is no lie or form of lie, and can be
 none, but grows as inevitably upon itself as the truth
 does upon itself,
 Or as any law of the earth or any natural production of the
 earth does.

¹ The meaning of the Indian name Mannahatta. See *Mannahatta* in the 'Sands at Seventy' group of poems, p. 414.

(This is curious and may not be realized immediately, but it
must be realized,
I feel in myself that I represent falsehoods equally with the
rest,
And that the universe does.)

Where has fail'd a perfect return indifferent of lies or the
truth?

Is it upon the ground, or in water or fire? or in the spirit of 10
man? or in the meat and blood?

Meditating among liars and retreating sternly into myself, I
see that there are really no liars or lies after all,

And that nothing fails its perfect return, and that what are
called lies are perfect returns,

And that each thing exactly represents itself and what has
preceded it,

And that the truth includes all, and is compact just as much
as space is compact,

And that there is no flaw or vacuum in the amount of the
truth—but that all is truth without exception;

And henceforth I will go celebrate any thing I see or am,

And sing and laugh and deny nothing.

1860

1871

A RIDDLE SONG

THAT which eludes this verse and any verse,
Unheard by sharpest ear, unform'd in clearest eye or cun-
ningest mind,

Nor lore nor fame, nor happiness nor wealth,
And yet the pulse of every heart and life throughout the
world incessantly,

Which you and I and all pursuing ever ever miss,
Open but still a secret, the real of the real, an illusion,
Costless, vouchsafed to each, yet never man the owner,

Which poets vainly seek to put in rhyme, historians in prose,
Which sculptor never chisel'd yet, not painter painted,

Which vocalist never sung, nor orator nor actor ever utter'd, 10
Invoking here and how I challenge for my song.

Indifferently, 'mid public, private haunts, in solitude,
Behind the mountain and the wood,
Companion of the city's busiest streets, through the assem-
blage,

It and its radiations constantly glide.

In looks of fair unconscious babes,
Or strangely in the coffin'd dead,
Or show of breaking dawn or stars by night,
As some dissolving delicate film of dreams,
Hiding yet lingering.

20

Two little breaths of words comprising it,
Two words, yet all from first to last comprised in it.

How ardently for it!
How many ships have sail'd and sunk for it!
How many travelers started from their homes and ne'er
return'd!
How much of genius boldly staked and lost for it!
What countless stores of beauty, love, ventur'd for it!
How all superbest deeds since Time began are traceable to it
—and shall be to the end!
How all heroic martyrdoms to it!
How, justified by it, the horrors, evils, battles of the earth!
How the bright fascinating lambent flames of it, in every age
and land, have drawn men's eyes,
Rich as a sunset on the Norway coast, the sky, the islands,
and the cliffs,
Or midnight's silent glowing northern lights unreachable.

30

Haply God's riddle it, so vague and yet so certain,
The soul for it, and all the visible universe for it,
And heaven at last for it.

1881

1881

EXCELSIOR

Who has gone farthest? for I would go farther,
And who has been just? for I would be the most just person
of the earth,
And who most cautious? for I would be more cautious,
And who has been happiest? O I think it is I—I think no one
was ever happier than I,
And who has lavish'd all? for I lavish constantly the best I
have,
And who proudest? for I think I have reason to be the
proudest son alive—for I am the son of the brawny and
tall-topt city,
And who has been bold and true? for I would be the boldest
and truest being of the universe,

And who benevolent? for I would show more benevolence
than all the rest,

And who has receiv'd the love of the most friends? for I
know what it is to receive the passionate love of many
friends,

And who possesses a perfect and enamour'd body? for I do
not believe any one possesses a more perfect or en-
amour'd body than mine, 10

And who thinks the amplest thoughts? for I would surround
those thoughts,

And who has made hymns fit for the earth? for I am mad
with devouring ecstasy to make joyous hymns for the
whole earth.

1856

1881

AH POVERTIES, WINCINGS, AND SULKY RETREATS

Ah poverties, wincings, and sulky retreats,
Ah you foes that in conflict have overcome me,
(For what is my life or any man's life but a conflict with foes,
the old, the incessant war?)

You degradations, you tussle with passions and appetites,
You smarts from dissatisfied friendships, (ah wounds the
sharpest of all!)

You toil of painful and choked articulations, you mean-
nesses,

You shallow tongue-talks at tables, (my tongue the shallow-
est of any;)

You broken resolutions, you racking angers, you smother'd
ennuis!

Ah think not you finally triumph, my real self has yet to come
forth,

It shall yet march forth o'ermastering, till all lies beneath me, 10
It shall yet stand up the soldier of ultimate victory.

1865-6

1881

THOUGHTS

Of public opinion,
Of a calm and cool fiat sooner or later, (how impassive! how
certain and final!)

Of the President with pale face asking secretly to himself,
What will the people say at last?

Of the frivolous Judge—of the corrupt Congressman,
 Governor, Mayor—of such as these standing helpless
 and exposed,
 Of the mumbling and screaming priest, (soon, soon deserted,)
 Of the lessening year by year of venerableness, and of the
 dicta of officers, statutes, pulpits, schools,
 Of the rising forever taller and stronger and broader of the
 intuitions of men and women, and of Self-esteem and
 Personality;
 Of the true New World—of the Democracies resplendent en-
 masse,
 Of the conformity of politics, armies, navies, to them,
 Of the shining sun by them—of the inherent light, greater 10
 than the rest,
 Of the envelopment of all by them, and the effusion of all
 from them.

1860

1881

MEDIUMS

THEY shall arise in the States,
 They shall report Nature, laws, physiology, and happiness,
 They shall illustrate Democracy and the kosmos,
 They shall be alimentive,¹ amative,¹ perceptive,
 They shall be complete women and men, their pose brawny
 and supple, their drink water, their blood clean and clear,
 They shall fully enjoy materialism and the sight of products,
 they shall enjoy the sight of the beef, lumber, bread-
 stuffs, of Chicago the great city,
 They shall train themselves to go in public to become orators
 and oratresses,
 Strong and sweet shall their tongues be, poems and materials
 of poems shall come from their lives, they shall be
 makers and finders,
 Of them and of their works shall emerge divine conveyers, to
 convey gospels,
 Characters, events, retrospections, shall be convey'd in gos- 10
 pels, trees, animals, waters, shall be convey'd,
 Death, the future, the invisible faith, shall all be convey'd.

1860

1871

¹ Phrenological terms indicating interest in food and sex.

WEAVE IN, MY HARDY LIFE

WEAVE in, weave in, my hardy life,
Weave yet a soldier strong and full for great campaigns to
come,
Weave in red blood, weave sinews in like ropes, the senses,
sight weave in,
Weave lasting sure, weave day and night the weft, the warp,
incessant weave, tire not,
(We know not what the use O life, nor know the aim, the end,
nor really aught we know,
But know the work, the need goes on and shall go on, the
death-envelop'd march of peace as well as war goes on,)
For great campaigns of peace the same the wiry threads to
weave,
We know not why or what, yet weave, forever weave.

1865

1881

SPAIN, 1873-4

OUT of the murk of heaviest clouds,
Out of the feudal wrecks and heap'd-up skeletons of kings,
Out of that old entire European debris, the shatter'd mum-
meries,
Ruin'd cathedrals, crumble of palaces, tombs of priests,
Lo, Freedom's features fresh undimm'd look forth—the same
immortal face looks forth;
(A glimpse as of thy Mother's face Columbia,
A flash significant as of a sword,
Beaming towards thee.)

Nor think we forget thee maternal;
Lag'd'st thou so long? shall the clouds close again upon thee?
Ah, but thou hast thyself now appear'd to us—we know thee,
Thou hast given us a sure proof, the glimpse of thyself,
Thou waitest there as everywhere thy time.

1873

1881

BY BROAD POTOMAC'S SHORE

By broad Potomac's shore, again old tongue,
(Still uttering, still ejaculating, canst never cease this babble?)
Again old heart so gay, again to you, your sense, the full
flush spring returning,
Again the freshness and the odors, again Virginia's summer
sky, pellucid blue and silver,

Again the forenoon purple of the hills,
Again the deathless grass, so noiseless soft and green,
Again the blood-red roses blooming.

Perfume this book of mine O blood-red roses!
Lave subtly with your waters every line Potomac!
Give me of you O spring, before I close, to put between its 10
pages!

O forenoon purple of the hills, before I close, of you!
O deathless grass, of you!

1876

1881

FROM FAR DAKOTA'S CAÑONS

June 25, 1876

FROM far Dakota's cañons,
Lands of the wild ravine, the dusky Sioux, the lonesome
stretch, the silence,
Haply to-day a mournful wail, haply a trumpet-note for
heroes.

The battle-bulletin,
The Indian ambushcade, the craft, the fatal environment,
The cavalry companies fighting to the last in sternest hero-
ism,
In the midst of their little circle, with their slaughter'd horses
for breastworks,
The fall of Custer¹ and all his officers and men.

Continues yet the old, old legend of our race,
The loftiest of life upheld by death, 10
The ancient banner perfectly maintain'd,
O lesson opportune, O how I welcome thee!

As sitting in dark days,
Lone, sulky, through the time's thick murk looking in vain
for light, for hope,
From unsuspected parts a fierce and momentary proof,
(The sun there at the centre though conceal'd,
Electric life forever at the centre,)
Breaks forth a lightning flash.

¹ General George Armstrong Custer, a famous Indian fighter who was killed with all his men on the Little Big Horn, on 25th June 1876.

Thou of the tawny flowing hair in battle,
I erewhile saw, with erect head, pressing ever in front, bearing
a bright sword in thy hand, 20
Now ending well in death the splendid fever of thy deeds,
(I bring no dirge for it or thee, I bring a glad triumphal
sonnet,)
Desperate and glorious, aye in defeat most desperate, most
glorious,
After thy many battles in which never yielding up a gun or a
color,
Leaving behind thee a memory sweet to soldiers,
Thou yieldest up thyself.

1876

1881

OLD WAR-DREAMS

IN midnight sleep of many a face of anguish,
Of the look at first of the mortally wounded, (of that indescribable look,)
Of the dead on their backs with arms extended wide,
I dream, I dream, I dream.

Of scenes of Nature, fields and mountains,
Of skies so beauteous after a storm, and at night the moon so
unearthly bright,
Shining sweetly, shining down, where we dig the trenches and
gather the heaps,
I dream, I dream, I dream.

Long have they pass'd, faces and trenches and fields,
Where through the carnage I moved with a callous com- 10
posure, or away from the fallen,
Onward I sped at the time—but now of their forms at night,
I dream, I dream, I dream.

1865-6

1881

THICK-SPRINKLED BUNTING

THICK-SPRINKLED bunting! flag of stars!
Long yet your road, fateful flag—long yet your road, and
lined with bloody death,
For the prize I see at issue at last is the world,
All its ships and shores I see interwoven with your threads
greedy banner;

Dream'd again the flags of kings, highest borne, to flaunt
unrival'd?

O hasten flag of man—O with sure and steady step, passing
highest flags of kings,

Walk supreme to the heavens mighty symbol—run up above
them all,

Flag of stars! thick-sprinkled bunting!

1865

1871

WHAT BEST I SEE IN THEE

To U. S. G.¹ return'd from his World's Tour

WHAT best I see in thee,

Is not that where thou mov'st down history's great highways,

Ever undimm'd by time shoots warlike victory's dazzle,

Or that thou sat'st where Washington sat, ruling the land in
peace,

Or thou the man whom feudal Europe fêted, venerable Asia
swarm'd upon,

Who walk'd with kings with even pace the round world's
promenade;

But that in foreign lands, in all thy walks with kings,

Those prairie sovereigns of the West, Kansas, Missouri,
Illinois,

Ohio's, Indiana's millions, comrades, farmers, soldiers, all to
the front,

Invisibly with thee walking with kings with even pace the 10
round world's promenade,

Were all so justified.

1879?

1881

SPIRIT THAT FORM'D THIS SCENE

Written in Platte Cañon, Colorado²

SPIRIT that form'd this scene,

These tumbled rock-piles grim and red,

These reckless heaven-ambitious peaks,

These gorges, turbulent-clear streams, this naked freshness,

These formless wild arrays, for reasons of their own,

I know thee, savage spirit—we have communed together,

¹ Ex-President Ulysses S. Grant.

² Whitman visited Denver and the Rocky Mountains in
1879.

Mine too such wild arrays, for reasons of their own;
 Was't charged against my chants they had forgotten art?
 To fuse within themselves its rules precise and delicatessen?
 The lyrist's measur'd beat, the wrought-out temple's grace— 10
 column and polish'd arch forgot?
 But thou that revelest here—spirit that form'd this scene,
 They have remember'd thee.

1881

1881

AS I WALK THESE BROAD MAJESTIC DAYS

As I walk these broad majestic days of peace,
 (For the war, the struggle of blood finish'd, wherein, O
 terrific Ideal,
 Against vast odds erewhile having gloriously won,
 Now thou stridest on, yet perhaps in time toward denser wars,
 Perhaps to engage in time in still more dreadful contests,
 dangers,
 Longer campaigns and crises, labors beyond all others,)
 Around me I hear that eclat of the world, politics, produce,
 The announcements of recognized things, science,
 The approved growth of cities and the spread of inventions.

I see the ships, (they will last a few years,) 10
 The vast factories with their foremen and workmen,
 And hear the indorsement of all, and do not object to it.

But I too announce solid things,
 Science, ships, politics, cities, factories, are not nothing,
 Like a grand procession to music of distant bugles pouring,
 triumphantly moving, and grander heaving in sight,
 They stand for realities—all is as it should be.

Then my realities;
 What else is so real as mine?
 Libertad and the divine average, freedom to every slave on
 the face of the earth,
 The rapt promises and *luminè*¹ of seers, the spiritual world, 20
 these centuries-lasting songs,
 And our visions, the visions of poets, the most solid an-
 nouncements of any.

1860

1881

¹ A coinage for *illumination* or *vision*.

A CLEAR MIDNIGHT

THIS is thy hour O soul, thy free flight into the wordless,
Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson
done,
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the
themes thou lovest best,
Night, sleep, death and the stars.

1881

1881

Songs of Parting

AS THE TIME DRAWS NIGH

As the time draws nigh glooming a cloud,
A dread beyond of I know not what darkens me.

I shall go forth,
I shall traverse the States awhile, but I cannot tell whither or
how long,
Perhaps soon some day or night while I am singing my voice
will suddenly cease.

O book, O chants! must all then amount to but this?
Must we barely arrive at this beginning of us?—and yet it is
enough, O soul;
O soul, we have positively appear'd—that is enough.

1860

1871

YEARS OF THE MODERN

YEARS of the modern! years of the unperform'd!
Your horizon rises, I see it parting away for more august
dramas,
I see not America only, not only Liberty's nation but other
nations preparing,
I see tremendous entrances and exits, new combinations, the
solidarity of races,
I see that force advancing with irresistible power on the
world's stage,
(Have the old forces, the old wars, played their parts? are the
acts suitable to them closed?)

I see Freedom, completely arm'd and victorious and very
haughty, with Law on one side and Peace on the other,
A stupendous trio all issuing forth against the idea of caste;
What historic denouements are these we so rapidly approach?
I see men marching and countermarching by swift millions,
I see the frontiers and boundaries of the old aristocracies
broken,

10

I see the landmarks of European kings removed,
I see this day the People beginning their landmarks, (all
others give way;)

Never were such sharp questions ask'd as this day,
Never was average man, his soul, more energetic, more like a
God,

Lo, how he urges and urges, leaving the masses no rest!
His daring foot is on land and sea everywhere, he colonizes
the Pacific, the archipelagoes,

With the steamship, the electric telegraph, the newspaper,
the wholesale engines of war,

With these and the world-spreading factories he interlinks all
geography, all lands;

What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of you,
passing under the seas?

20

Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one
heart to the globe?

Is humanity forming en-masse? for lo, tyrants tremble,
crowns grow dim,

The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a general
divine war,

No one knows what will happen next, such portents fill the
days and nights;

Years prophetic! the space ahead as I walk, as I vainly try
to pierce it, is full of phantoms,

Unborn deeds, things soon to be, project their shapes around
me,

This incredible rush and heat, this strange ecstatic fever of
dreams O years!

Your dreams O years, how they penetrate through me! (I
know not whether I sleep or wake;)

The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring in
shadow behind me,

The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance, advance
upon me.

30

1865¹

1881

¹ This remarkable prophecy of the first World War was
partly written as early as 1856.

ASHES OF SOLDIERS

ASHES of soldiers South or North,
As I muse retrospective murmuring a chant in thought,
The war resumes, again to my sense your shapes,
And again the advance of the armies.

Noiseless as mists and vapors,
From their graves in the trenches ascending,
From cemeteries all through Virginia and Tennessee,
From every point of the compass out of the countless graves,
In wafted clouds, in myriads large, or squads of twos or
 threes or single ones they come,
And silently gather round me.

10

Now sound no note O trumpeters,
Not at the head of my cavalry parading on spirited horses,
With sabres drawn and glistening, and carbines by their
 thighs, (ah my brave horsemen!
My handsome tan-faced horsemen! what life, what joy and
 pride,
With all the perils were yours.)

Nor you drummers, neither at reveillé at dawn,
Nor the long roll alarming the camp, nor even the muffled
 beat for a burial,
Nothing from you this time O drummers bearing my warlike
 drums.

But aside from these and the marts of wealth and the crowded
 promenade,
Admitting around me comrades close unseen by the rest and
 voiceless, 20
The slain elate and alive again, the dust and debris alive,
I chant this chant of my silent soul in the name of all dead
 soldiers.

Faces so pale with wondrous eyes, very dear, gather closer
 yet,
Draw close, but speak not.

Phantoms of countless lost,
Invisible to the rest henceforth become my companions,
Follow me ever—desert me not while I live.

Sweet are the blooming cheeks of the living—sweet are the
 musical voices sounding,
But sweet, ah sweet, are the dead with their silent eyes.

Dearest comrades, all is over and long gone,
 But love is not over—and what love, O comrades
 Perfume from battle-fields rising, up from the foeter arising.

Perfume therefore my chant, O love, immortal love,
 Give me to bathe the memories of all dead soldiers,
 Shroud them, embalm them, cover them all over with tender
 pride.

Perfume all—make all wholesome,
 Make these ashes to nourish and blossom,
 O love, solve all, fructify all with the last chemistry.

Give me exhaustless, make me a fountain,
 That I exhale love from me wherever I go like a moist 40
 perennial dew,
 For the ashes of all dead soldiers South or North.

1865

1881

THOUGHTS

I

Of these years I sing,
 How they pass and have pass'd through convuls'd pains, as
 through parturitions,
 How America illustrates birth, muscular youth, the promise,
 the sure fulfilment, the absolute success, despite of
 people—illustrates evil as well as good,
 The vehement struggle so fierce for unity in one's-self;
 How many hold despairingly yet to the models departed,
 caste, myths, obedience, compulsion, and to infidelity,
 How few see the arrived models, the athletes, the Western
 States, or see freedom or spirituality, or hold any faith
 in results,
 (But I see the athletes, and I see the results of the war glorious
 and inevitable, and they again leading to other results.)

How the great cities appear—how the Democratic masses,
 turbulent, wilful, as I love them,

How the whirl, the contest, the wrestle of evil with good, the
 sounding and resounding, keep on and on,

How society waits unform'd, and is for a while between 10
 things ended and things begun,

How America is the continent of glories, and of the triumph
 of freedom and of the Democracies, and of the fruits of
 society, and of all that is begun,

And how the States are complete in themselves—and how all triumphs and glories are complete in themselves, to lead onward,

And how these of mine and of the States will in their turn be convuls'd, and serve other parturitions and transitions,

And how all people, sights, combinations, the democratic masses too, serve—and how every fact, and war itself, with all its horrors, serves,

And how now or at any time each serves the exquisite transition of death.

2

Of seeds dropping into the ground, of births,
Of the steady concentration of America, inland, upward, to impregnable and swarming places,

Of what Indiana, Kentucky, Arkansas, and the rest, are to be,
Of what a few years will show there in Nebraska, Colorado, Nevada, and the rest,

(Or afar, mounting the Northern Pacific to Sitka or Aliaska,¹)

Of what the feuillage of America is the preparation for—and of what all sights, North, South, East and West, are,

Of this Union welded in blood, of the solemn price paid, of the unnamed lost ever present in my mind;

Of the temporary use of materials for identity's sake,

Of the present, passing, departing—of the growth of completer men than any yet,

Of all sloping down there where the fresh free giver the mother, the Mississippi flows,

Of mighty inland cities yet unsurvey'd and unsuspected,

Of the new and good names, of the modern developments, of inalienable homesteads,

Of a free and original life there, of simple diet and clean and sweet blood,

Of liveness, majestic faces, clear eyes, and perfect physique there,

Of immense spiritual results future years far West, each side of the Anahuacs,²

Of these songs, well understood there, (being made for that area,)

Of the native scorn of grossness and gain there,

(O it lurks in me night and day—what is gain after all to savageness and freedom?)

1860

1881

¹ Alaska.

² Plateau in Central Mexico.

SONG AT SUNSET

SPLENDOR of ended day floating and filling me,
Hour prophetic, hour resuming the past,
Inflating my throat, you divine average,
You earth and life till the last ray gleams I sing.

Open mouth of my soul uttering gladness,
Eyes of my soul seeing perfection,
Natural life of me faithfully praising things,
Corroborating forever the triumph of things.

Illustrious every one!

Illustrious what we name space, sphere of unnumber'd
spirits, 10

Illustrious the mystery of motion in all beings, even the
tiniest insect,

Illustrious the attribute of speech, the senses, the body,

Illustrious the passing light—illustrious the pale reflection
on the new moon in the western sky,

Illustrious whatever I see or hear or touch, to the last.

Good in all,

In the satisfaction and aplomb of animals,

In the annual return of the seasons,

In the hilarity of youth,

In the strength and flush of manhood,

In the grandeur and exquisiteness of old age, 20

In the superb vistas of death.

Wonderful to depart!

Wonderful to be here!

The heart, to jet the all-alike and innocent blood!

To breathe the air, how delicious!

To speak—to walk—to seize something by the hand!

To prepare for sleep, for bed, to look on my rose-color'd
flesh!

To be conscious of my body, so satisfied, so large!

To be this incredible God I am!

To have gone forth among other Gods, these men and 30
women I love.

Wonderful how I celebrate you and myself!

How my thoughts play subtly at the spectacles around!

How the clouds pass silently overhead!

How the earth darts on and on! and how the sun, moon,
stars, dart on and on!

How the water sports and sings! (surely it is alive!)
How the trees rise and stand up, with strong trunks, with
branches and leaves!
(Surely there is something more in each of the trees, some
living soul.)

O amazement of things—even the least particle!
O spirituality of things!
O strain musical flowing through ages and continents, now 40
reaching me and America!
I take your strong chords, intersperse them, and cheerfully
pass them forward.

I too carol the sun, usher'd or at noon, or as now, set-
ting,
I too throb to the brain and beauty of the earth and of all the
growths of the earth,
I too have felt the resistless call of myself.
As I steam'd down the Mississippi,
As I wander'd over the prairies,
As I have lived, as I have look'd through my windows my eyes,
As I went forth in the morning, as I beheld the light breaking
in the east,
As I bathed on the beach of the Eastern Sea, and again on the
beach of Western Sea,
As I roam'd the streets of inland Chicago, whatever streets I 50
have roam'd,
Or cities or silent woods, or even amid the sights of war,
Wherever I have been I have charged myself with content-
ment and triumph.

I sing to the last the equalities modern or old,
I sing the endless finalés of things,
I say Nature continues, glory continues,
I praise with electric voice,
For I do not see one imperfection in the universe,
And I do not see one cause or result lamentable at last in the
universe.

O setting sun! though the time has come,
I still warble under you, if none else does, unmitigated adora- 60
tion.

AS AT THY PORTALS ALSO DEATH

As at thy portals also death,
Entering thy sovereign, dim, illimitable grounds,
To memories of my mother, to the divine blending, maternity,
To her, buried and gone, yet buried not, gone not from me,
(I see again the calm benignant face fresh and beautiful still,
I sit by the form in the coffin,
I kiss and kiss convulsively again the sweet old lips, the
cheeks, the closed eyes in the coffin;)
To her, the ideal woman, practical, spiritual, of all of earth,
life, love, to me the best,
I grave a monumental line, before I go, amid these songs,
And set a tombstone here.¹

1881

1881

10

MY LEGACY

THE business man the acquirer vast,
After assiduous years surveying results, preparing for de-
parture,
Devises houses and lands to his children, bequeaths stocks,
goods, funds for a school or hospital,
Leaves money to certain companions to buy tokens, sou-
venirs of gems and gold.

But I, my life surveying, closing,
With nothing to show to devise from its idle years,
Nor houses nor lands, nor tokens of gems or gold for my
friends,
Yet certain remembrances of the war for you, and after you,
And little souvenirs of camps and soldiers, with my love,
I bind together and bequeath in this bundle of songs.

1872

1881

10

PENSIVE ON HER DEAD GAZING

PENSIVE on her dead gazing I heard the Mother of All,
Desperate on the torn bodies, on the forms covering the
battle-fields gazing,
(As the last gun ceased, but the scent of the powder-smoke
linger'd,)
As she call'd to her earth with mournful voice while she
stalk'd,

¹ Louisa Whitman died in 1873.

Absorb them well O my earth, she cried, I charge you lose
 not my sons, lose not an atom,
 And you streams absorb them well, taking their dear blood,
 And you local spots, and you airs that swim above lightly
 impalpable,
 And all you essences of soil and growth, and you my rivers'
 depths,
 And you mountain sides, and the woods where my dear chil-
 dren's blood trickling redden'd,
 And you trees down in your roots to bequeath to all future 10
 trees,
 My dead absorb or South or North—my young men's bodies
 absorb, and their precious precious blood,
 Which holding in trust for me faithfully back again give me
 many a year hence,
 In unseen essence and odor of surface and grass, centuries
 hence,
 In blowing airs from the fields back again give me my dar-
 lings, give my immortal heroes,
 Exhale me them centuries hence, breathe me their breath, let
 not an atom be lost,
 O years and graves! O air and soil! O my dead, an aroma
 sweet!
 Exhale them perennial sweet death, years, centuries hence.
 1865 1881

CAMPS OF GREEN

NOT alone those camps of white, old comrades of the wars,
 When as order'd forward, after a long march,
 Footsore and weary, soon as the light lessens we halt for the
 night,
 Some of us so fatigued carrying the gun and knapsack, drop-
 ping asleep in our tracks,
 Others pitching the little tents, and the fires lit up begin to
 sparkle,
 Outposts of pickets posted surrounding alert through the
 dark,
 And a word provided for countersign, careful for safety,
 Till to the call of the drummers at daybreak loudly beating
 the drums,
 We rise up refresh'd, the night and sleep pass'd over, and
 resume our journey,
 Or proceed to battle. 10

Lo, the camps of the tents of green,
Which the days of peace keep filling, and the days of war
keep filling,
With a mystic army, (is it too order'd forward? is it too only
halting awhile,
Till night and sleep pass over?)

Now in those camps of green, in their tents dotting the world,
In the parents, children, husbands, wives, in them, in the old
and young,
Sleeping under the sunlight, sleeping under the moonlight,
content and silent there at last,
Behold the mighty bivouac-field and waiting-camp of all,
Of the corps and generals all, and the President over the
corps and generals all,
And of each of us O soldiers, and of each and all in the ranks 20
we fought,
(There without hatred we all, all meet.)

For presently O soldiers, we too camp in our place in the
bivouac-camps of green,
But we need not provide for outposts, nor word for the
counter-sign,
Nor drummer to beat the morning drum.

1865

1881

THE SOBBING OF THE BELLS

(*Midnight, Sept. 19-20, 1881*)¹

THE sobbing of the bells, the sudden death-news everywhere,
The slumberers rouse, the rapport of the People,
(Full well they know that message in the darkness,
Full well return, respond within their breasts, their brains,
the sad reverberations,)
The passionate toll and clang—city to city, joining, sounding,
passing,
Those heart-beats of a Nation in the night.

1881

1821

¹ The occasion of this poem was the death of President James A. Garfield, whom Whitman had known in Washington, and who had been shot on 2nd July.

AS THEY DRAW TO A CLOSE

As they draw to a close,
Of what underlies the precedent songs—of my aims in them,
Of the seed I have sought to plant in them,
Of joy, sweet joy, through many a year, in them,
(For them, for them have I lived, in them my work is done,)
Of many an aspiration fond, of many a dream and plan;
Through Space and Time fused in a chant, and the flowing
 eternal identity,
To Nature encompassing these, encompassing God—to the
 joyous, electric all,
To the sense of Death, and accepting exulting in Death in its
 turn the same as life,
The entrance of man to sing;
To compact you, ye parted, diverse lives,
To put rapport the mountains and rocks and streams,
And the winds of the north, and the forests of oak and pine,
With you O soul.

1871

1881

JOY, SHIPMATE, JOY!

Joy, shipmate, joy!
(Pleas'd to my soul at death I cry,)
Our life is closed, our life begins,
The long, long anchorage we leave,
The ship is clear at last, she leaps!
She swiftly courses from the shore,
Joy, shipmate, joy!

1871

1871

THE UNTOLD WANT

THE untold want by life and land ne'er granted,
Now voyager sail thou forth to seek and find.

1871

1871

PORTALS

WHAT are those of the known but to ascend and enter the
 Unknown?
And what are those of life but for Death?

1871

1871

THESE CAROLS

THESE carols sung to cheer my passage through the world I
see,
For completion I dedicate to the Invisible World.

1871

1871

NOW FINALE TO THE SHORE

Now finale to the shore,
Now land and life finale and farewell,
Now Voyager depart, (much, much for thee is yet in store,)
Often enough hast thou adventur'd o'er the seas,
Cautiously cruising, studying the charts,
Duly again to port and hawser's tie returning;
But now obey thy cherish'd secret wish,
Embrace thy friends, leave all in order,
To port and hawser's tie no more returning,
Depart upon thy endless cruise old Sailor.

1871

1871

10

SO LONG!¹

To conclude, I announce what comes after me,
I remember I said before my leaves sprang at all,
I would raise my voice jocund and strong with reference to
consummations.

When America does what was promis'd,
When through these States walk a hundred millions of superb
persons,
When the rest part away for superb persons and contribute
to them,
When breeds of the most perfect mothers denote America,
Then to me and mine our due fruition.

I have press'd through in my own right,
I have sung the body and the soul, war and peace have I sung,
and the songs of life and death,
And the songs of birth, and shown that there are many
births.

10

¹ Though it was written in 1860, Whitman always kept this poem at the end of the constantly growing *Leaves of Grass* (exclusive of the annexes). The colloquial term, though by some taken to be derived from *salaam*, is in America used as a friendly and informal *au revoir*.

I have offer'd my style to every one, I have journey'd with
confident step;

While my pleasure is yet at the full I whisper *So long!*

And take the young woman's hand and the young man's
hand for the last time.

I announce natural persons to arise,

I announce justice triumphant,

I announce uncompromising liberty and equality,

I announce the justification of candor and the justification of
pride.

I announce that the identity of these States is a single identity
only,

I announce the Union more and more compact, indissoluble,

I announce splendors and majesties to make all the previous
politics of the earth insignificant.

I announce adhesiveness, I say it shall be limitless, un-
loosen'd,

I say you shall yet find the friend you were looking for.

I announce a man or woman coming, perhaps you are the
one, (*So long!*)

I announce the great individual, fluid as Nature, chaste,
affectionate, compassionate, fully arm'd.

I announce a life that shall be copious, vehement, spiritual,
bold,

I announce an end that shall lightly and joyfully meet its
translation.

I announce myriads of youths, beautiful, gigantic, sweet-
blooded,

I announce a race of splendid and savage old men.

O thicker and faster—(*So long!*)

O crowding too close upon me,

I foresee too much, it means more than I thought,

It appears to me I am dying.

Hasten throat and sound your last,

Salute me—salute the days once more. Peal the old cry once
more.

Screaming electric, the atmosphere using,

At random glancing, each as I notice absorbing,

Swiftly on, but a little while alighting,
Curious envelop'd messages delivering,
Sparkles hot, seed ethereal down in the dirt dropping,
Myself unknowing, my commission obeying, to question it
never daring,

40

To ages and ages yet the growth of the seed leaving,
To troops out of the war arising, they the tasks I have set
promulging,

To women certain whispers of myself bequeathing, their
affection me more clearly explaining,

To young men my problems offering—no dallier I—I the
muscle of their brains trying,

So I pass, a little time vocal, visible, contrary,

Afterward a melodious echo, passionately bent for, (death
making me really undying,)

The best of me then when no longer visible, for toward that
I have been incessantly preparing.

What is there more, that I lag and pause and crouch extended
with unshut mouth?

Is there a single final farewell?

50

My songs cease, I abandon them,

From behind the screen where I hid I advance personally
solely to you.

Camerado, this is no book,

Who touches this touches a man,

(Is it night? are we here together alone?)

It is I you hold and who holds you,

I spring from the pages into your arms—decease calls me
forth.

O how your fingers drowse me,

Your breath falls around me like dew, your pulse lulls the
tympan of my ears,

I feel immersed from head to foot,

Delicious, enough.

60

Enough O deed impromptu and secret,

Enough O gliding present—enough O summ'd-up past.

Dear friend whoever you are take this kiss,

I give it especially to you, do not forget me,

I feel like one who has done work for the day to retire awhile,

I receive now again of my many translations, from my a-
taras¹ ascending, while others doubtless await me,

¹ Avatars, reincarnations.

An unknown sphere more real than I dream'd, more direct,
darts awakening rays about me, *So long!*
Remember my words, I may again return,
I love you, I depart from materials,
I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.

1860

1881

70

Sands at Seventy

[*First Annex*]¹

MANNAHATTA

My city's fit and noble name resumed,
Choice aboriginal name, with marvellous beauty, meaning,
*A rocky founded island—shores where ever gayly dash the
coming, going, hurrying sea waves.*

1888

1888-9

PAUMANOK

SEA-BEAUTY! stretch'd and basking!
One side thy inland ocean laving, broad, with copious com-
merce, steamers, sails,
And one the Atlantic's wind caressing, fierce or gentle—
mighty hulls dark-gliding in the distance.
Isle of sweet brooks of drinking-water—healthy air and soil!
Isle of the salty shore and breeze and brine!

1888

1888-9

FROM MONTAUK POINT²

I STAND as on some mighty eagle's beak,
Eastward the sea absorbing, viewing, (nothing but sea and sky,)
The tossing waves, the foam, the ships in the distance.
The wild unrest, the snowy, curling caps—that inbound urge
and urge of waves,
Seeking the shores forever.

1888

1888-9

¹ Many of the short poems in this section were written for the daily New York *Herald*.

² The extreme eastern part of Long Island.

TO THOSE WHO 'VE FAIL'D

To those who 've fail'd, in aspiration vast,
To unnam'd soldiers fallen in front on the lead,
To calm, devoted engineers—to over-ardent travelers—to
pilots on their ships,
To many a lofty song and picture without recognition—I 'd
rear a laurel-cover'd monument,
High, high above the rest—To all cut off before their time,
Possess'd by some strange spirit of fire,
Quench'd by an early death.

1888

1888-9

A CAROL CLOSING SIXTY-NINE

A CAROL closing sixty-nine—a *résumé*—a repetition,
My lines in joy and hope continuing on the same,
Of ye, O God, Life, Nature, Freedom, Poetry;
Of you, my Land—your rivers, prairies, States—you, mottled
Flag I love,
Your aggregate retain'd entire—Of north, south, east and
west, your items all;
Of me myself—the jocund heart yet beating in my breast,
The body wreck'd, old, poor and paralyzed¹—the strange
inertia falling pall-like round me,
The burning fires down in my sluggish blood not yet extinct,
The undiminish'd faith—the groups of loving friends.

1888

1888-9

THE BRAVEST SOLDIERS

BRAVE, brave were the soldiers (high named to-day) who
lived through the fight;
But the bravest press'd to the front and fell, unnamed, un-
known.

1888

1888-9

¹ Whitman was stricken with paralysis in January 1873.

A FONT OF TYPE¹

THIS latent mine—these unlaunch'd voices—passionate
powers,
Wrath, argument, or praise, or comic leer, or prayer devout,
(Not nonpareil, brevier, bourgeois, long primer merely,) ²
These ocean waves arousable to fury and to death,
Or sooth'd to ease and sheeny sun and sleep,
Within the pallid slivers slumbering.

1888

1888-9

AS I SIT WRITING HERE

As I sit writing here, sick and grown old,
Not my least burden is that dulness of the years, querilities,²
Ungracious glooms, aches, lethargy, constipation, whimper-
ing *ennui*,
May filter in my daily songs.

1888

1888-9

MY CANARY BIRD

DID we count great, O soul, to penetrate the themes of
mighty books,
Absorbing deep and full from thoughts, plays, speculations?
But now from thee to me, caged bird, to feel thy joyous
warble,
Filling the air, the lonesome room, the long forenoon,
Is it not just as great, O soul?

1888

1888-9

QUERIES TO MY SEVENTIETH YEAR

APPROACHING, nearing, curious,
Thou dim, uncertain spectre—bringest thou life or death?
Strength, weakness, blindness, more paralysis and heavier?
Or placid skies and sun? Wilt stir the waters yet?
Or haply cut me short for good? Or leave me here as now,
Dull, parrot-like and old, with crack'd voice harping,
screeching?

1888

1888-9

¹ Whitman had been a compositor as well as a newspaper editor.

² Querulities.

THE WALLABOUT MARTYRS

*(In Brooklyn, in an old vault, mark'd by no special recognition, lie huddled at this moment the undoubtedly authentic remains of the stanchest and earliest Revolutionary patriots from the British prison ships and prisons of the times of 1776-83, in and around New York, and from all over Long Island; originally buried—many thousands of them—in trenches in the Wallabout sands.)*¹

GREATER than memory of Achilles or Ulysses,
More, more by far to thee than tomb of Alexander,
Those cart loads of old charnel ashes, scales and splints of
mouldy bones,
Once living men—once resolute courage, aspiration, strength,
The stepping stones to thee to-day and here, America.

1888

1888-9

THE FIRST DANDELION

SIMPLE and fresh and fair from winter's close emerging,
As if no artifice of fashion, business, politics, had ever been,
Forth from its sunny nook of shelter'd grass—innocent,
golden, calm as the dawn,
The spring's first dandelion shows its trustful face.

1888

1888-9

AMERICA

CENTRE of equal daughters, equal sons,
All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old,
Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,
Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,
A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,
Chair'd in the adamant of Time.

1888

1888-9

MEMORIES

How sweet the silent backward tracings!
The wanderings as in dreams—the meditation of old times
resumed—their loves, joys, persons, voyages.

1888

1888-9

¹ Now suitably entombed in Washington Park (Fort Greene), Brooklyn.

TO-DAY AND THEE

THE appointed winners in a long-stretch'd game;
The course of Time and nations—Egypt, India, Greece and
Rome;
The past entire, with all its heroes, histories, arts, experi-
ments,
Its store of songs, inventions, voyages, teachers, books,
Garner'd for now and thee—To think of it!
The heirdom all converged in thee!

1888

1888-9

AFTER THE DAZZLE OF DAY

AFTER the dazzle of day is gone,
Only the dark, dark night shows to my eyes the stars;
After the clangor of organ majestic, or chorus, or perfect
band,
Silent, athwart my soul, moves the symphony true.

1888

1888-9

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, BORN FEBRUARY 12, 1809

(Publish'd Feb. 12, 1888)

TO-DAY, from each and all, a breath of prayer—a pulse of
thought,
To memory of Him—to birth of Him.

1888

1888-9

OUT OF MAY'S SHOWS SELECTED

APPLE orchards, the trees all cover'd with blossoms;
Wheat fields carpeted far and near in vital emerald green;
The eternal, exhaustless freshness of each early morning;
The yellow, golden, transparent haze of the warm afternoon
sun;
The aspiring lilac bushes with profuse purple or white
flowers.

1888

1888-9

HALCYON DAYS

NOT from successful love alone,
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor victories of politics
or war;
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent passions calm,

As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover the evening sky,
As softness, fulness, rest, suffuse the frame, like fresher,
balmier air,
As the days take on a mellow light, and the apple at last
hangs really finish'd and indolent-ripe on the tree,
Then for the teeming quietest, happiest days of all!
The brooding and blissful halcyon days!

1888

1888-9

FANCIES AT NAVESINK

The Pilot in the Mist

STEAMING the northern rapids—(an old St. Lawrence re-
miniscence,
A sudden memory-flash comes back, I know not why,
Here waiting for the sunrise, gazing from this hill;) ¹
Again 'tis just at morning—a heavy haze contends with day-
break,
Again the trembling, laboring vessel veers me—I press
through foam-dash'd rocks that almost touch me,
Again I mark where aft the small thin Indian helmsman
Looms in the mist, with brow elate and governing hand.

Had I the Choice

HAD I the choice to tally greatest bards,
To limn their portraits, stately, beautiful, and emulate at
will,
Homer with all his wars and warriors—Hector, Achilles,
Ajax,
Or Shakspeare's woe-entangled Hamlet, Lear, Othello—
Tennyson's fair ladies,
Metre or wit the best, or choice conceit to wield in perfect
rhyme, delight of singers;
These, these, O sea, all these I 'd gladly barter,
Would you the undulation of one wave, its trick to me trans-
fer,
Or breathe one breath of yours upon my verse,
And leave its odor there.

¹ Navesink—a sea-side mountain, lower entrance of New York Bay. [AUTHOR'S NOTE.]

You Tides with Ceaseless Swell

YOU tides with ceaseless swell! you power that does this work!
You unseen force, centripetal, centrifugal, through space's
spread,
Rapport of sun, moon, earth, and all the constellations,
What are the messages by you from distant stars to us? what
Sirius? what Capella's?
What central heart—and you the pulse—vivifies all? what
boundless aggregate of all?
What subtle indirection and significance in you? what clue to
all in you? what fluid, vast identity,
Holding the universe with all its parts as one—as sailing in a
ship?

Last of Ebb, and Daylight Waning

LAST of ebb, and daylight waning,
Scented sea-cool landward making, smells of sedge and salt
incoming,
With many a half-caught voice sent up from the eddies,
Many a muffled confession—many a sob and whisper'd word,
As of speakers far or hid.
How they sweep down and out! how they mutter!
Poets unnamed—artists greatest of any, with cherish'd lost
designs,
Love's unresponse—a chorus of age's complaints—hope's
last words,
Some suicide's despairing cry, *Away to the boundless waste,
and never again return.*

On to oblivion then!
On, on, and do your part, ye burying, ebbing tide!
On for your time, ye furious debouché!

10

And Yet Not You Alone

AND yet not you alone, twilight and burying ebb,
Nor you, ye lost designs alone—nor failures, aspirations;
I know, divine deceitful ones, your glamour's seeming;
Duly by you, from you, the tide and light again—duly the
hinges turning,
Duly the needed discord-parts offsetting, blending,
Weaving from you, from Sleep, Night, Death itself,
The rhythmus of Birth eternal.

Proudly the Flood Comes In

PROUDLY the flood comes in, shouting, foaming, advancing,
Long it holds at the high, with bosom broad outswelling,
All throbs, dilates—the farms, woods, streets of cities—
workmen at work,
Mainsails, topsails, jibs, appear in the offing—steamers'
pennants of smoke—and under the forenoon sun,
Freighted with human lives, gaily the outward bound, gaily
the inward bound,
Flaunting from many a spar the flag I love.

By That Long Scan of Waves

By that long scan of waves, myself call'd back, resumed upon
myself,
In every crest some undulating light or shade—some retro-
spect,
Joys, travels, studies, silent panoramas—scenes, ephemeral,
The long past war, the battles, hospital sights, the wounded
and the dead,
Myself through every by-gone phase—my idle youth—old
age at hand,
My three-score years of life summ'd up, and more, and past,
By any grand ideal tried, intentionless, the whole a nothing,
And haply yet some drop within God's scheme's ensemble—
some wave, or part of wave,
Like one of yours, ye multitudinous ocean.

Then Last of All

THEN last of all, caught from these shores, this hill,
Of you O tides, the mystic human meaning:
Only by law of you, your swell and ebb, enclosing me the same,
The brain that shapes, the voice that chants this song.

1885

1888-9

ELECTION DAY, NOVEMBER 1884

IF I should need to name, O Western World, your power-
fulest scene and show,
'Twould not be you, Niagara—nor you, ye limitless prairies
—nor your huge rifts of canyons, Colorado,
Nor you, Yosemite—nor Yellowstone, with all its spasmic
geyser loops ascending to the skies, appearing and dis-
appearing,

Nor Oregon's white cones—nor Huron's belt of mighty lakes
—nor Mississippi's stream:

—This seething hemisphere's humanity, as now, I 'd name—
the still small voice vibrating—America's choosing day,
(The heart of it not in the chosen—the act itself the main, the
quadrennial choosing,)

The stretch of North and South arous'd—sea-board and in-
land—Texas to Maine—the Prairie States—Vermont,
Virginia, California,

The final ballot-shower from East to West—the paradox and
conflict,

The countless snow-flakes falling—(a swordless conflict,
Yet more than all Rome's wars of old, or modern Napo- 10
leon's :) the peaceful choice of all,

Or good or ill humanity—welcoming the darker odds, the
dross:

—Foams and ferments the wine? it serves to purify—while
the heart pants, life glows:

These stormy gusts and winds waft precious ships,
Swell'd Washington's, Jefferson's, Lincoln's sails.

1884

1888-9

WITH HUSKY-HAUGHTY LIPS, O SEA!

WITH husky-haughty lips, O sea!

Where day and night I wend thy surf-beat shore,
Imaging to my sense thy varied strange suggestions,
(I see and plainly list thy talk and conference here,) 10
Thy troops of white-maned racers racing to the goal,
Thy ample, smiling face, dash'd with the sparkling dimples of
the sun,

Thy brooding scowl and murk—thy unloos'd hurricanes,
Thy unsubduedness, caprices, wilfulness;
Great as thou art above the rest, thy many tears—a lack from
all eternity in thy content,

(Naught but the greatest struggles, wrongs, defeats, could 10
make thee greatest—no less could make thee,)

Thy lonely state—something thou ever seek'st and seek'st,
yet never gain'st,

Surely some right withheld—some voice, in huge monoton-
ous rage, of freedom-lover pent,

Some vast heart, like a planet's, chain'd and chafing in those
breakers,

By lengthen'd swell, and spasm, and panting breath,
And rhythmic rasping of thy sands and waves,

And serpent hiss, and savage peals of laughter,
 And undertones of distant lion roar,
 (Sounding, appealing to the sky's deaf ear—but now, rapport
 for once,
 A phantom in the night thy confidant for once,)
 The first and last confession of the globe,
 Outsurgings, muttering from thy soul's abysms,
 The tale of cosmic elemental passion,
 Thou tellest to a kindred soul.

1883

1888-9

20

DEATH OF GENERAL GRANT¹

As one by one withdraw the lofty actors,
 From that great play on history's stage eterne,
 That lurid, partial act of war and peace—of old and new
 contending,
 Fought out through wrath, fears, dark dismays, and many a
 long suspense;
 All past—and since, in countless graves receding, mellowing,
 Victor's and vanquish'd—Lincoln's and Lee's—now thou
 with them,
 Man of the mighty days—and equal to the days!
 Thou from the prairies!—tangled and many-vein'd and hard
 has been thy part,
 To admiration has it been enacted!

1885

1888-9

RED JACKET (FROM ALOFT)

*(Impromptu on Buffalo City's monument to, and re-burial of
 the old Iroquois orator, October 9, 1884)*

UPON this scene, this show,
 Yielded to-day by fashion, learning, wealth,
 (Nor in caprice alone—some grains of deepest meaning,)
 Haply, aloft, (who knows?) from distant sky-clouds' blended
 shapes,
 As some old tree, or rock or cliff, thrill'd with its soul,
 Product of Nature's sun, stars, earth direct—a towering
 human form,
 In hunting-shirt of film, arm'd with the half-ironical
 smile curving its phantom lips,
 Like one of Ossian's ghosts looks down.

1884

1888-9

¹ On 23rd July 1885.

WASHINGTON'S MONUMENT, FEBRUARY 1885¹

AH, not this marble, dead and cold:
Far from its base and shaft expanding—the round zones
 circling, comprehending,
Thou, Washington, art all the world's, the continent's entire
 —not yours alone, America,
Europe's as well, in every part, castle of lord or laborer's
 cot,
Or frozen North, or sultry South—the African's—the Arab's
 in his tent,
Old Asia's there with venerable smile, seated amid her ruins;
(Greets the antique the hero new? 'tis but the same—the heir
 legitimate, continued ever,
The indomitable heart and arm—proofs of the never-broken
 line,
Courage, alertness, patience, faith, the same—e'en in defeat
 defeated not, the same:)
Wherever sails a ship, or house is built on land, or day or
 night,
Through teeming cities' streets, indoors or out, factories or
 farms,
Now, or to come, or past—where patriot wills existed or
 exist,
Wherever Freedom, pois'd by Toleration, sway'd by Law,
Stands or is rising thy true monument.

1885?

1888-9

OF THAT BLITHE THROAT OF THINE

(More than eighty-three degrees north—about a good day's steaming distance to the Pole by one of our fast oceaners² in clear water—Greely the explorer heard the song of a single snow-bird merrily sounding over the desolation.)

OF that blithe throat of thine from arctic bleak and blank,
I 'll mind the lesson, solitary bird—let me too welcome chill-
 ing drifts,
E'en the profoundest chill, as now—a torpid pulse, a brain
 unnerv'd,

¹ The monument was dedicated 21st February, the day before Washington's birthday. The corner-stone was laid in 1848.

² Ocean steamships; a coinage.

Old age land-lock'd within its winter bay—(cold, cold, O cold!)

These snowy hairs, my feeble arm, my frozen feet,
For them thy faith, thy rule I take, and grave it to the last;
Not summer's zones alone—not chants of youth, or south's
warm tides alone,
But held by sluggish floes, pack'd in the northern ice, the
cumulus of years,
These with gay heart I also sing.

1884

1888-9

BROADWAY

WHAT hurrying human tides, or day or night!
What passions, winnings, losses, ardors, swim thy waters!
What whirls of evil, bliss and sorrow, stem thee!
What curious questioning glances—glints of love!
Leer, envy, scorn, contempt, hope, aspiration!
Thou portal—thou arena—thou of the myriad long-drawn
lines and groups!
(Could but thy flagstones, curbs, façades, tell their inimitable
tales;
Thy windows rich, and huge hotels—thy side-walks wide;) 10
Thou of the endless sliding, mincing, shuffling feet!
Thou, like the parti-colored world itself—like infinite, teem-
ing, mocking life!
Thou visor'd, vast, unspeakable show and lesson!

1888

1888-9

TO GET THE FINAL LILT OF SONGS

To get the final lilt of songs,
To penetrate the inmost lore of poets—to know the mighty
ones,
Job, Homer, Eschylus, Dante, Shakspeare, Tennyson, Emer-
son;
To diagnose the shifting-delicate tints of love and pride and
doubt—to truly understand,
To encompass these, the last keen faculty and entrance-
price,
Old age, and what it brings from all its past experiences.

1888

1888-9

OLD SALT KOSSABONE

FAR back, related on my mother's side,
Old Salt Kossabone, I 'll tell you how he died:
(Had been a sailor all his life—was nearly 90—lived with his
married grandchild, Jenny;
House on a hill, with view of bay at hand, and distant cape,
and stretch to open sea;
The last of afternoons, the evening hours, for many a year his
regular custom,
In his great arm chair by the window seated,
(Sometimes, indeed, through half the day,)
Watching the coming, going of the vessels, he mutters to
himself—And now the close of all:
One struggling outbound brig, one day, baffled for long—
cross-tides and much wrong going,
At last at nightfall strikes the breeze aright, her whole luck 10
veering,
And swiftly bending round the cape, the darkness proudly
entering, cleaving, as he watches,
'She 's free—she 's on her destination'—these the last words
—when Jenny came, he sat there dead,
Dutch Kossabone, Old Salt, related on my mother's side, far
back.

1888

1888-9

THE DEAD TENOR¹

As down the stage again,
With Spanish hat and plumes, and gait inimitable,
Back from the fading lessons of the past, I 'd call, I 'd tell and
own,
How much from thee! the revelation of the singing voice
from thee!
(So firm—so liquid soft—again that tremulous, manly timbre!
The perfect singing voice—deepest of all to me the lesson—
trial and test of all:)
How through those strains distill'd—how the rapt ears, the
soul of me, absorbing
Fernando's heart, *Manrico's* passionate call, *Ernani's*, sweet
Gennaro's,
I fold thenceforth, or seek to fold, within my chants trans-
muting,
Freedom's and Love's and Faith's unloos'd cantabile, 10

¹ Pasquale Brignoli. who died 3rd November 1884.

(As perfume's, color's, sunlight's correlation :)
From these, for these, with these, a hurried line, dead tenor,
A wafted autumn leaf, dropt in the closing grave, the
shovel'd earth,
To memory of thee.

1884

1888-9

CONTINUITIES

(From a talk I had lately with a German spiritualist)

NOTHING is ever really lost, or can be lost,
No birth, identity, form—no object of the world,
Nor life, nor force, nor any visible thing;
Appearance must not foil, nor shifted sphere confuse thy
brain.

Ample are time and space—ample the fields of Nature.
The body, sluggish, aged, cold—the embers left from earlier
fires,

The light in the eye grown dim, shall duly flame again;
The sun now low in the west rises for mornings and for noons
continual;

To frozen clods ever the spring's invisible law returns,
With grass and flowers and summer fruits and corn.

1888

1888-9

10

YONNONDIO

*(The sense of the word is lament for the aborigines. It is an
Iroquois term; and has been used for a personal name.)*

A SONG, a poem of itself—the word itself a dirge,
Amid the wilds, the rocks, the storm and wintry night,
To me such misty, strange tableaux the syllables calling up;
Yonnondio—I see, far in the west or north, a limitless ravine,
with plains and mountains dark,

I see swarms of stalwart chieftains, medicine-men,¹ and war-
riors,

As flitting by like clouds of ghosts, they pass and are gone in
the twilight,

(Race of the woods, the landscapes free, and the falls!
No picture, poem, statement, passing them to the future;)
Yonnondio! Yonnondio!—unlimn'd they disappear;

¹ Indian magicians.

To-day gives place, and fades—the cities, farms, factories fade;
A muffled sonorous sound, a wailing word is borne through
the air for a moment,
Then blank and gone and still, and utterly lost.
1887 1888-9

LIFE

EVER the undiscouraged, resolute, struggling soul of man;
(Have former armies fail'd? then we send fresh armies—and
fresh again;)
Ever the grappled mystery of all earth's ages old or new;
Ever the eager eyes, hurrahs, the welcome-clapping hands,
the loud applause;
Ever the soul dissatisfied, curious, unconvinced at last;
Struggling to-day the same—battling the same.
1888 1888-9

'GOING SOMEWHERE'

My science-friend, my noblest woman-friend,¹
(Now buried in an English grave—and this a memory-leaf
for her dear sake,)
Ended our talk—'The sum, concluding all we know of old
or modern learning, intuitions deep,
'Of all Geologies—Histories—of all Astronomy—of Evolu-
tion, Metaphysics all,
'Is, that we all are onward, onward, speeding slowly, surely
bettering,
'Life, life an endless march, an endless army, (no halt, but it
is duly over,)
'The world, the race, the soul—in space and time the uni-
verses,
'All bound as is befitting each—all surely going some-
where.'
1887 1888-9

SMALL THE THEME OF MY CHANT

(From the 1867 edition 'L. of G.')

SMALL the theme of my Chant, yet the greatest—namely,
One's-Self—a simple, separate person. That, for the use
of the New World, I sing,

¹ Anne Gilchrist, who died on 29th November 1885.

Man's physiology complete, from top to toe, I sing. Not
physiognomy alone, nor brain alone, is worthy for the
Muse;—I say the Form complete is worthier far. The
Female equally with the Male, I sing.

Nor cease at the theme of One's-Self. I speak the word of the
modern, the word En-Masse.

My Days I sing, and the Lands—with interstice I knew of
hapless War.

(O friend, whoe'er you are, at last arriving hither to com-
mence, I feel through every leaf the pressure of your
hand, which I return.

And thus upon our journey, footing the road, and more than
once, and link'd together let us go.)

1867

1888-9

TRUE CONQUERORS

Old farmers, travelers, workmen (no matter how crippled or
bent,)

Old sailors, out of many a perilous voyage, storm and wreck,
Old soldiers from campaigns, with all their wounds, defeats
and scars;

Enough that they 've survived at all—long life's unflinching
ones!

Forth from their struggles, trials, fights, to have emerged at
all—in that alone,

True conquerors o'er all the rest.

1888

1888-9

THE UNITED STATES TO OLD WORLD CRITICS

HERE first the duties of to-day, the lessons of the concrete,
Wealth, order, travel, shelter, products, plenty;

As of the building of some varied, vast, perpetual edifice,
Whence to arise inevitable in time, the towering roofs, the lamps,
The solid-planted spires tall shooting to the stars.

1888

1888-9

THE CALMING THOUGHT OF ALL

THAT coursing on, whate'er men's speculations,
Amid the changing schools, theologies, philosophies,
Amid the bawling presentations new and old,
The round earth's silent vital laws, facts, modes continue.

1888

1888-9

THANKS IN OLD AGE

THANKS in old age—thanks ere I go,
For health, the midday sun, the impalpable air—for life,
 mere life,
For precious ever-lingering memories, (of you my mother
 dear—you father—you, brothers, sisters, friends,)
For all my days—not those of peace alone—the days of war
 the same,
For gentle words, caresses, gifts from foreign lands,
For shelter, wine and meat—for sweet appreciation,
(You distant, dim unknown—or young or old—countless,
 unspecified, readers belov'd,
We never met, and ne'er shall meet—and yet our souls em-
 brace, long, close and long;)
For beings, groups, love, deeds, words, books—for colors,
 forms,
For all the brave strong men—devoted, hardy men—who 've
 forward sprung in freedom's help, all years, all lands,
For braver, stronger, more devoted men—(a special laurel
 ere I go, to life's war's chosen ones,
The cannoneers of song and thought—the great artillerists—
 the foremost leaders, captains of the soul:)
As soldier from an ended war return'd—As traveler out of
 myriads, to the long procession retrospective,
Thanks—joyful thanks!—a soldier's, traveler's thanks.

1888

1888-9

LIFE AND DEATH

THE two old, simple problems ever intertwined,
Close home, elusive, present, baffled, grappled.
By each successive age insoluble, pass'd on,
To ours to-day—and we pass on the same.

1888

1888-9

THE VOICE OF THE RAIN

AND who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower,
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here translated:
I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain,
Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the bottomless
 sea,
Upward to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd, altogether
 changed, and yet the same,

I descend to lave the drouths, atomies, dust-layers of the
globe,
And all that in them without me were seeds only, latent, un-
born;
And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my own
origin and make pure and beautify it;
(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfilment, wan-
dering,
Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns.)

1885

1888-9

10

SOON SHALL THE WINTER'S FOIL BE HERE

Soon shall the winter's foil be here;
Soon shall these icy ligatures unbind and melt—A little while,
And air, soil, wave, suffused shall be in softness, bloom and
growth—a thousand forms shall rise
From these dead clods and chills as from low burial graves.
Thine eyes, ears—all thy best attributes—all that takes cog-
nizance of natural beauty,
Shall wake and fill. Thou shalt perceive the simple shows,
the delicate miracles of earth,
Dandelions, clover, the emerald grass, the early scents and
flowers,
The arbutus under foot, the willow's yellow-green, the blos-
soming plum and cherry;
With these the robin, lark and thrush, singing their songs—
the flitting bluebird;
For such the scenes the annual play brings on.

1888

1888-9

10

WHILE NOT THE PAST FORGETTING

(Publish'd May 30,¹ 1888)

WHILE not the past forgetting,
To-day, at least, contention sunk entire—peace, brotherhood
uprisen;
For sign reciprocal our Northern, Southern hands,
Lay on the graves of all dead soldiers, North or South,
(Nor for the past alone—for meanings to the future,)
Wreaths of roses and branches of palm.

1888

1888-9

¹ In the United States, Memorial Day or Decoration Day,
a holiday for commemorating the war dead.

THE DYING VETERAN

(A Long Island incident—early part of the nineteenth century)

AMID these days of order, ease, prosperity,
Amid the current songs of beauty, peace, decorum,
I cast a reminiscence—(likely 'twill offend you,
I heard it in my boyhood;)—More than a generation since,
A queer old savage man, a fighter under Washington himself,
(Large, brave, cleanly, hot-blooded, no talker, rather spiri-
tualistic,
Had fought in the ranks—fought well—had been all through
the Revolutionary war,)
Lay dying—sons, daughters, church-deacons, lovingly tend-
ing him,
Sharpening their sense, their ears, towards his murmuring,
half-caught words:

'Let me return again to my war-days,
To the sights and scenes—to forming the line of battle,
To the scouts ahead reconnoitering,
To the cannons, the grim artillery,
To the galloping aids, carrying orders,
To the wounded, the fallen, the heat, the suspense,
The perfume strong, the smoke, the deafening noise;
Away with your life of peace!—your joys of peace!
Give me my old wild battle-life again!'

1887

1888-9

10

STRONGER LESSONS

HAVE you learn'd lessons only of those who admired you,
and were tender with you, and stood aside for you?
Have you not learn'd great lessons from those who reject
you, and brace themselves against you? or who treat you
with contempt, or dispute the passage with you?

1888

1888-9

A PRAIRIE SUNSET

SHOT gold, maroon and violet, dazzling silver, emerald, fawn,
The earth's whole amplitude and Nature's multiform power
consign'd for once to colors;
The light, the general air possess'd by them—colors till now
unknown,

No limit, confine—not the Western sky alone—the high
meridian—North, South, all,
Pure luminous color fighting the silent shadows to the last.
1888 1888-9

TWENTY YEARS

DOWN on the ancient wharf, the sand, I sit, with a new-
comer chatting:
He shipp'd as green-hand boy, and sail'd away, (took some
sudden, vehement notion;)
Since, twenty years and more have circled round and round,
While he the globe was circling round and round,—and now
returns:
How changed the place—all the old land-marks gone—the
parents dead;
(Yes, he comes back *to lay in port for good—to settle*—has a
well-fill'd purse—no spot will do but this;)
The little boat that scull'd him from the sloop, now held in
leash I see,
I hear the slapping waves, the restless keel, the rocking in the
sand,
I see the sailor kit, the canvas bag, the great box bound with
brass,
I scan the face all berry-brown and bearded—the stout- 10
strong frame,
Dress'd in its russet suit of good Scotch cloth:
(Then what the told-out story of those twenty years? What
of the future?)
1887 1888-9

ORANGE BUDS BY MAIL FROM FLORIDA

(*Voltaire closed a famous argument by claiming that a ship
of war and the grand opera were proofs enough of civilization's
and France's progress, in his day.*)

A LESSER proof than old Voltaire's, yet greater,
Proof of this present time, and thee, thy broad expanse,
America,
To my plain Northern hut, in outside clouds and snow,
Brought safely for a thousand miles o'er land and tide,
Some three days since on their own soil live-sprouting,
Now here their sweetness through my room unfolding,
A bunch of orange buds by mail from Florida.
1888 1888-9

TWILIGHT

THE soft voluptuous opiate shades,
The sun just gone, the eager light dispell'd—(I too will soon
be gone, dispell'd,)
A haze—nirwana—rest and night—oblivion.

1887

1888-9

YOU LINGERING SPARSE LEAVES OF ME

You lingering sparse leaves of me on winter-nearing boughs,
And I some well-shorn tree of field or orchard-row;
You tokens diminute and lorn—(not now the flush of May,
or July clover-bloom—no grain of August now;)
You pallid banner-staves—you pennants valueless—you
overstay'd of time,
Yet my soul-dearest leaves confirming all the rest,
The faithfulest—hardiest—last.

1887

1888-9

NOT MEAGRE, LATENT BOUGHS ALONE

NOT meagre, latent boughs alone, O songs! (scaly and bare,
like eagles' talons,)
But haply for some sunny day (who knows?) some future
spring, some summer—bursting forth,
To verdant leaves, or sheltering shade—to nourishing
fruit,
Apples and grapes—the stalwart limbs of trees emerging—
the fresh, free, open air,
And love and faith, like scented roses blooming.

1887

1888-9

THE DEAD EMPEROR¹

(Publish'd March 10, 1888)

TO-DAY, with bending head and eyes, thou, too, Columbia,
Less for the mighty crown laid low in sorrow—less for the
Emperor,
Thy true condolence breathest, sendest out o'er many a salt
sea mile,
Mourning a good old man—a faithful shepherd, patriot.

1888

1888-9

¹ Emperor William I of Germany.

AS THE GREEK'S SIGNAL FLAME

(For Whittier's ¹ eightieth birthday, December 17, 1887)

As the Greek's signal flame, by antique records told,
Rose from the hill-top, like applause and glory,
Welcoming in fame some special veteran, hero,
With rosy tinge reddening the land he 'd served,
So I aloft from Mannahatta's ship-fringed shore,
Lift high a kindled brand for thee, Old Poet.

1887

1888-9

THE DISMANTLED SHIP ²

In some unused lagoon, some nameless bay,
On sluggish, lonesome waters, anchor'd near the shore,
An old, dismasted, gray and batter'd ship, disabled, done,
After free voyages to all the seas of earth, haul'd up at last
and hawser'd tight,
Lies rusting, mouldering.

1888

1888-9

NOW PRECEDENT SONGS, FAREWELL

Now precedent songs, farewell—by every name farewell,
(Trains of a staggering line in many a strange procession,
waggon,
From ups and downs—with intervals—from elder years,
mid-age, or youth,)
In Cabin'd Ships, or Thee Old Cause or Poets to Come
Or Paumanok, Song of Myself, Calamus, or Adam,
Or Beat! Beat! Drums! or To the Leaven'd Soil they Trod,
Or Captain! My Captain! Kosmos, Quicksand Years, or
Thoughts,
Thou Mother with thy Equal Brood, and many, many more
unspecified,
From fibre heart of mine—from throat and tongue—(My
life's hot pulsing blood,
The personal urge and form for me—not merely paper, auto-
matic type and ink,) 10
Each song of mine—each utterance in the past—having its
long, long history,

¹ John Greenleaf Whittier, Quaker abolitionist poet.

² Suggested by a painting in the home of Thomas B. Harned.

Of life or death, or soldier's wound, of country's loss or safety,
(O heaven! what flash and started endless train of all! compared indeed to that!

What wretched shred e'en at the best of all!)

1888

1888-9

AN EVENING LULL

AFTER a week of physical anguish,
Unrest and pain, and feverish heat,
Toward the ending day a calm and lull comes on,
Three hours of peace and soothing rest of brain.¹

1888

1888-9

OLD AGE'S LAMBENT PEAKS

THE touch of flame—the illuminating fire—the loftiest look
at last,

O'er city, passion, sea—o'er prairie, mountain, wood—the
earth itself;

The airy, different, changing hues of all, in falling twilight,
Objects and groups, bearings, faces, reminiscences;

The calmer sight—the golden setting, clear and broad:

So much i' the atmosphere, the points of view, the situations
whence we scan,

Bro't out by them alone—so much (perhaps the best) un-
reck'd before;

The lights indeed from them—old age's lambent peaks.

1888

1889

AFTER THE SUPPER AND TALK

AFTER the supper and talk—after the day is done,
As a friend from friends his final withdrawal prolonging,
Good-bye and Good-bye with emotional lips repeating,
(So hard for his hand to release those hands—no more will
they meet,

¹ The two songs on pages 435-6 [*Now Precedent Songs, Farewell* and *An Evening Lull*] are eked out during an afternoon, June 1888, in my seventieth year, at a critical spell of illness. Of course no reader and probably no human being at any time will ever have such phases of emotional and solemn action as these involve to me. I feel in them an end and close of all. [AUTHOR'S NOTE.]

No more for communion of sorrow and joy, of old and young,
 A far-stretching journey awaits him, to return no more,)
 Shunning, postponing severance—seeking to ward off the
 last word ever so little,
 E'en at the exit-door turning—charges superfluous calling
 back—e'en as he descends the steps,
 Something to eke out a minute additional—shadows of
 nightfall deepening,
 Farewells, messages lessening—dimmer the forthgoer's vis- 10
 age and form,
 Soon to be lost for aye in the darkness—loth, O so loth to
 depart!
 Garrulous to the very last.
 1887 1888-9

Good-bye My Fancy

(Second Annex)

SAIL OUT FOR GOOD, EIDÓLON YACHT!

HEAVE the anchor short!
 Raise main-sail and jib—steer forth,
 O little white-hull'd sloop, now speed on really deep waters,
 (I will not call it our concluding voyage,
 But outset and sure entrance to the truest, best, maturest;)
 Depart, depart from solid earth—no more returning to these
 shores,
 Now on for aye our infinite free venture wending,
 Spurning all yet tried ports, seas, hawsers, densities, gravi-
 tation,
 Sail out for good, eidólon yacht of me!
 1891 1891-2

LINGERING LAST DROPS

AND whence and why come you?
 We know not whence, (was the answer,)
 We only know that we drift here with the rest,
 That we linger'd and lagg'd—but were wafted at last, and are
 now here,
 To make the passing shower's concluding drops,
 1891 1891-2

GOOD-BYE MY FANCY

GOOD-BYE¹ my fancy—(I had a word to say,
But 'tis not quite the time—The best of any man's word or say,
Is when its proper place arrives—and for its meaning,
I keep mine till the last.)

1891

1891-2

ON, ON THE SAME, YE JOCUND TWAIN!

ON, on the same, ye jocund twain!
My life and recitative, containing birth, youth, mid-age years,
Fitful as motley-tongues of flame, inseparably twined and
merged in one—combining all,
My single soul—aims, confirmations, failures, joys—Nor
single soul alone,
I chant my nation's crucial stage, (America's, haply human-
ity's)—the trial great, the victory great,
A strange *eclaircissement* of all the masses past, the eastern
world, the ancient, medieval,
Here, here from wanderings, strayings, lessons, wars, defeats
—here at the west a voice triumphant—justifying all,
A gladsome pealing cry—a song for once of utmost pride and
satisfaction;
I chant from it the common bulk, the general average horde,
(the best no sooner than the worst)—And now I chant
old age,
(My verses, written first for forenoon life, and for the sum-
mer's, autumn's spread,
I pass to snow-white hairs the same, and give to pulses win-
ter-cool'd the same;)

10

¹ Behind a Good-bye there lurks much of the salutation of another beginning—to me, Development, Continuity, Immortality, Transformation, are the chiefest life-meanings of Nature and Humanity, and are the *sine qua non* of all facts, and each fact.

Why do folks dwell so fondly on the last words, advice, appearance, of the departing? Those last words are not samples of the best, which involve vitality at its full, and balance, and perfect control and scope. But they are valuable beyond measure to confirm and endorse the varied train, facts, theories and faith of the whole preceding life. [AUTHOR'S NOTE.]

As here in careless trill, I and my recitatives, with faith and
love,
Wafting to other work, to unknown songs, conditions,
On, on, ye jocund twain! continue on the same!

1891

1891-2

MY 71ST YEAR

AFTER surmounting three-score and ten,
With all their chances, changes, losses, sorrows,
My parents' deaths, the vagaries of my life, the many tearing
passions of me, the war of '63 and '4,
As some old broken soldier, after a long, hot, wearying
march, or haply after battle,
To-day at twilight, hobbling, answering company roll-call,
Here, with vital voice,
Reporting yet, saluting yet the Officer over all.

1889

1891-2

APPARITIONS

A VAGUE mist hanging 'round half the pages:
(Sometimes how strange and clear to the soul,
That all these solid things are indeed but apparitions, con-
cepts, non-realities.)

1891

1891-2

THE PALLID WREATH

SOMEHOW I cannot let it go yet, funeral though it is,
Let it remain back there on its nail suspended,
With pink, blue, yellow, all blanch'd, and the white now gray
and ashy,
One wither'd rose put years ago for thee, dear friend;
But I do not forget thee. Hast thou then faded?
Is the odor exhaled? Are the colors, vitalities, dead?
No, while memories subtly play—the past vivid as ever;
For but last night I woke, and in that spectral ring saw
thee,
Thy smile, eyes, face, calm, silent, loving as ever;
So let the wreath hang still awhile within my eye-reach,
It is not yet dead to me, nor even pallid.

1891

1891-2

AN ENDED DAY

THE soothing sanity and blitheness of completion,
The pomp and hurried contest-glare and rush are done;
Now triumph! transformation! jubilate!¹

1891

1891-2

OLD AGE'S SHIP & CRAFTY DEATH'S

FROM east and west across the horizon's edge,
Two mighty masterful vessels sailers steal upon us:
But we 'll make race a-time upon the seas—a battle-contest
yet! bear lively there!

¹ NOTE.—*Summer country life.—Several years.*—In my rambles and explorations I found a woody place near the creek, where for some reason the birds in happy mood seem'd to resort in unusual numbers. Especially at the beginning of the day, and again at the ending, I was sure to get there the most copious bird-concerts. I repair'd there frequently at sunrise—and also at sunset, or just before. . . . Once the question arose in me: Which is the best singing, the first or the lattermost? The first always exhilarated, and perhaps seem'd more joyous and stronger; but I always felt the sunset or late afternoon sounds more penetrating and sweeter—seem'd to touch the soul—often the evening thrushes, two or three of them, responding and perhaps blending. Though I miss'd some of the mornings, I found myself getting to be quite strictly punctual at the evening utterances.

ANOTHER NOTE.—'He went out with the tide and the sunset,' was a phrase I heard from a surgeon describing an old sailor's death under peculiarly gentle conditions.

During the Secession War, 1863 and '4, visiting the Army Hospitals around Washington, I form'd the habit, and continued it to the end, whenever the ebb or flood tide began the latter part of the day, of punctually visiting those at that time populous wards of suffering men. Somehow (or I thought so) the effect of the hour was palpable. The badly wounded would get some ease, and would like to talk a little, or be talk'd to. Intellectual and emotional natures would be at their best: Deaths were always easier; medicines seem'd to have better effect when given then, and a lulling atmosphere would pervade the wards.

Similar influences, similar circumstances and hours, day-close, after great battles, even with all their horrors. I had more than once the same experience on the fields cover'd with fallen or dead. [AUTHOR'S NOTE.]

(Our joys of strife and derring-do to the last!)
Put on the old ship all her power to-day!
Crowd top-sail, top-gallant and royal studding-sails,
Out challenge and defiance—flags and flaunting pennants
added,
As we take to the open! take to the deepest, freest waters.

1890 1891-2

TO THE PENDING YEAR¹

HAVE I no weapon-word for thee—some message brief and
fierce?
(Have I fought out and done indeed the battle?) Is there no
shot left,
For all thy affectations, lisps, scorns, manifold silliness?
Nor for myself—my own rebellious self in thee?

Down, down, proud gorge!—though choking thee;
Thy bearded throat and high-borne forehead to the gutter;
Crouch low thy neck to eleemosynary gifts.

1889 1891-2

SHAKSPERE-BACON'S CIPHER²

I DOUBT it not—then more, far more;
In each old song bequeath'd—in every noble page or text,
(Different—something unreck'd before—some unsuspected
author,)
In every object, mountain, tree, and star—in every birth and
life,
As part of each—evolv'd from each—meaning, behind the
ostent,
A mystic cipher waits infolded.

1891 1891-2

¹ Original title, *To the Year 1889*. From 1876 on, Whitman had occasionally received financial assistance from friends in America and in the British Isles.

² Though an admirer of Shakespeare from his youth, Whitman was no Shakespearean scholar. This poem probably shows the influence of his Baconian friend, William Douglas O'Connor.

LONG, LONG HENCE

AFTER a long, long course, hundreds of years, denials,
Accumulations, rous'd love and joy and thought,
Hopes, wishes, aspirations, ponderings, victories, myriads of
 readers,
Coating, compassing, covering—after ages' and ages' en-
 crustations,
Then only may these songs reach fruition.

1891

1891-2

BRAVO, PARIS EXPOSITION!

ADD to your show, before you close it, France,
With all the rest, visible, concrete, temples, towers, goods,
 machines and ores,
Our sentiment wafted from many million heart-throbs,
 ethereal but solid,
(We grand-sons and great-grand-sons do not forget your
 grand-sires,)
From fifty Nations and nebulous Nations, compacted, sent
 oversea to-day,
America's applause, love, memories and good-will.

1889

1891-2

INTERPOLATION SOUNDS

*(General Philip Sheridan was buried at the Cathedral,
Washington, D.C., August 1888, with all the pomp, music, and
ceremonies of the Roman Catholic service.)*

OVER and through the burial chant,
Organ and solemn service, sermon, bending priests,
To me come interpolation sounds not in the show—plainly
 to me, crowding up the aisle and from the window,
Of sudden battle's hurry and harsh noises—war's grim game
 to sight and ear in earnest;
The scout call'd up and forward—the general mounted and
 his aids around him—the new-brought word—the in-
 stantaneous order issued;
The rifle crack—the cannon thud—the rushing forth of men
 from their tents;

The clank of cavalry—the strange celerity of forming ranks
—the slender bugle note;
The sound of horses' hoofs departing—saddles, arms, accoutrements.¹

1888

1891-2

TO THE SUNSET BREEZE

AH, whispering, something again, unseen,
Where late this heated day thou enterest at my window, door,
Thou, laving, tempering all, cool-freshing, gently vitalizing
Me, old, alone, sick, weak-down, melted-worn with sweat;
Thou, nestling, folding close and firm yet soft, companion
better than talk, book, art,
(Thou hast, O Nature! elements! utterance to my heart beyond the rest—and this is of them,)
So sweet thy primitive taste to breathe within—thy soothing
fingers on my face and hands,
Thou, messenger-magical strange bringer to body and spirit
of me,
(Distances balk'd—occult medicines penetrating me from
head to foot,)
I feel the sky, the prairies vast—I feel the mighty northern
lakes, 10

¹ NOTE. CAMDEN, N.J., 7th August 1888. Walt Whitman asks the New York *Herald* 'to add his tribute to Sheridan':

'In the grand constellation of five or six names, under Lincoln's Presidency, that history will bear for ages in her firmament as marking the last life-throbs of secession, and beaming on its dying gasps, Sheridan's will be bright. One consideration rising out of the now dead soldier's example as it passes my mind, is worth taking notice of. If the war had continued any long time these States, in my opinion, would have shown and proved the most conclusive military talents ever evinced by any nation on earth. That they possess'd a rank and file ahead of all other known in points of quality and limitlessness of number are easily admitted. But we have, too, the eligibility of organizing, handling and officering equal to the other. These two, with modern arms, transportation and inventive American genius, would make the United States, with earnestness, not only able to stand the whole world, but conquer that world united against us.'
[AUTHOR'S NOTE.]

I feel the ocean and the forest—somehow I feel the globe
 itself swift-swimming in space;
 Thou blown from lips so loved, now gone—haply from end-
 less store, God-sent,
 (For thou art spiritual, Godly, most of all known to my sense,)
 Minister to speak to me, here and now, what word has never
 told, and cannot tell,
 Art thou not universal concrete's distillation? Law's, all
 Astronomy's last refinement?
 Hast thou no soul? Can I not know, identify thee?

1890

1891-2

OLD CHANTS

AN ancient song, reciting, ending,
 Once gazing toward thee, Mother of All,
 Musing, seeking themes fitted for thee,
Accept for me, thou saidst, the elder ballads,
And name for me before thou goest each ancient poet.

(Of many debts incalculable,
 Haply our New World's chiefest debt is to old poems.)

Ever so far back, preluding thee, America,
 Old chants, Egyptian priests, and those of Ethiopia,
 The Hindu epics, the Grecian, Chinese, Persian,
 The Biblic books and prophets, and deep idyls of the
 Nazarene,

10

The Iliad, Odyssey, plots, doings, wanderings of Eneas,
 Hesiod, Eschylus, Sophocles, Merlin, Arthur,
 The Cid, Roland at Roncesvalles, the Nibelungen,
 The troubadours, minstrels, minnesingers, skalds,
 Chaucer, Dante, flocks of singing birds,
 The Border Minstrelsy, the bye-gone ballads, feudal tales,
 essays, plays,

Shakspeare, Schiller, Walter Scott, Tennyson,
 As some vast wondrous weird dream-presences,
 The great shadowy groups gathering around,
 Darting their mighty masterful eyes forward at thee,
 Thou! with as now thy bending neck and head, with cour-
 teous hand and word, ascending,
 Thou! pausing a moment, drooping thine eyes upon them,
 blent with their music,

20

Well pleased, accepting all, curiously prepared for by them,
 Thou enterest at thy entrance porch.

1891

1891-2

A CHRISTMAS GREETING

(*From a Northern Star-Group to a Southern, 1889-90*)¹

WELCOME, Brazilian brother—thy ample place is ready;
A loving hand—a smile from the north—a sunny instant hail!
(Let the future care for itself, where it reveals its troubles,
impedimentas,
Ours, ours the present throe, the democratic aim, the accept-
ance and the faith;)
To thee to-day our reaching arm, our turning neck—to thee
from us the expectant eye,
Thou cluster free! thou brilliant lustrous one! thou, learning
well,
The true lesson of a nation's light in the sky,
(More shining than the Cross, more than the Crown,)
The height to be superb humanity.

1889

1891-2

SOUNDS OF THE WINTER

SOUNDS of the winter too,
Sunshine upon the mountains—many a distant strain
From cheery railroad train—from nearer field, barn, house,
The whispering air—even the mute crops, garner'd apples,
corn,
Children's and women's tones—rhythm of many a farmer
and of flail,
An old man's garrulous lips among the rest, *Think not we*
give out yet,
Forth from these snowy hairs we keep up yet the lilt.

1891

1891-2

A TWILIGHT SONG

As I sit in twilight late alone by the flickering oak-flame,
Musing on long-pass'd war-scenes—of the countless buried
unknown soldiers,
Of the vacant names, as unindented air's and sea's—the un-
return'd,

¹ The occasion is the overthrow of the Brazilian Empire and the calling of the National Congress.

The brief truce after battle, with grim burial-squads, and the
 deep-fill'd trenches
 Of gather'd dead from all America, North, South, East,
 West, whence they came up,
 From wooded Maine, New-England's farms, from fertile
 Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio,
 From the measureless West, Virginia, the South, the Caro-
 linas, Texas,
 (Even here in my room-shadows and half-lights in the noise-
 less flickering flames,
 Again I see the stalwart ranks on-filing, rising—I hear the
 rhythmic tramp of the armies;)

You million unwrit names all, all—you dark bequest from all 10
 the war,
 A special verse for you—a flash of duty long neglected—your
 mystic roll strangely gather'd here,
 Each name recall'd by me from out the darkness and death's
 ashes,
 Henceforth to be, deep, deep within my heart recording, for
 many a future year,
 Your mystic roll entire of unknown names, or North or
 South,
 Embalm'd with love in this twilight song.

1890

1891-2

WHEN THE FULL-GROWN POET CAME

WHEN the full-grown poet came,
 Out spake pleased Nature (the round impassive globe, with
 all its shows of day and night,) saying, *He is mine*;
 But out spake too the Soul of man, proud, jealous and unre-
 conciled, *Nay, he is mine alone*;
 —Then the full-grown poet stood between the two, and took
 each by the hand;
 And to-day and ever so stands, as blender, uniter, tightly
 holding hands,
 Which he will never release until he reconciles the two,
 And wholly and joyously blends them.

1891

1891-2

OSCEOLA¹

(When I was nearly grown to manhood in Brooklyn, New York (middle of 1838), I met one of the return'd U.S. Marines from Fort Moultrie, S. C., and had long talks with him—learn'd the occurrence below described—death of Osceola. The latter was a young, brave, leading Seminole, in the Florida war of that time—was surrender'd to our troops, imprison'd, and literally died of 'a broken heart,' at Fort Moultrie. He sicken'd of his confinement—the doctor and officers made every allowance and kindness possible for him; then the close.)

WHEN his hour for death had come,
He slowly rais'd himself from the bed on the floor,
Drew on his war-dress, shirt, leggings, and girdled the belt
 around his waist,
Call'd for vermilion paint (his looking-glass was held before
 him,)
Painted half his face and neck, his wrists, and back-hands,
Put the scalp-knife carefully in his belt—then lying down,
 resting a moment,
Rose again, half sitting, smiled, gave in silence his extended
 hand to each and all,
Sank faintly low to the floor (tightly grasping the tomahawk
 handle,)
Fix'd his look on wife and little children—the last:
(And here a line in memory of his name and death.)

1890

1891-2

10

A VOICE FROM DEATH

(The Johnstown, Penn., cataclysm, May 31, 1889)

A VOICE from Death, solemn and strange, in all his sweep and
 power,
With sudden, indescribable blow—towns drown'd—humanity
 by thousands slain,
The vaunted work of thrift, goods, dwellings, forge, street,
 iron bridge,
Dash'd pell-mell by the blow—yet usher'd life continuing on,
(Amid the rest, amid the rushing, whirling, wild debris,
A suffering woman saved—a baby safely born!)

¹ In Whitman's home in Camden, New Jersey, hung a large print of Osceola given to him by George Catlin, the lithographer. Osceola's grandfather was a Scotchman.

Although I come and unannounc'd, in horror and in pang,
In pouring flood and fire, and wholesale elemental crash,
 (this voice so solemn, strange,)
I too a minister of Deity.

Yea, Death, we bow our faces, veil our eyes to thee,
We mourn the old, the young untimely drawn to thee,
The fair, the strong, the good, the capable,
The household wreck'd, the husband and the wife, the en-
 gulf'd forger in his forge,
The corpses in the whelming waters and the mud,
The gather'd thousands to their funeral mounds, and thou-
 sands never found or gather'd.

Then after burying, mourning the dead,
(Faithful to them found or unfound, forgetting not, bearing
 the past, here new musing,)
A day—a passing moment or an hour—America itself bends
 low,
Silent, resign'd, submissive.

War, death, cataclysm like this, America,
Take deep to thy proud prosperous heart.

E'en as I chant, lo! out of death, and out of ooze and slime,
The blossoms rapidly blooming, sympathy, help, love,
From West and East, from South and North and over sea,
Its hot-spurr'd hearts and hands humanity to human aid
 moves on;
And from within a thought and lesson yet.

Thou ever-darting Globe! through Space and Air!
Thou waters that encompass us!
Thou that in all the life and death of us, in action or in sleep!
Thou laws invisible that permeate them and all,
Thou that in all, and over all, and through and under all,
 incessant!
Thou! thou! the vital, universal, giant force resistless, sleep-
 less, calm,
Holding Humanity as in thy open hand, as some ephemeral
 toy,
How ill to e'er forget thee!

For I too have forgotten,
(Wrapt in these little potencies of progress, politics, culture,
 wealth, inventions, civilization,)

Have lost my recognition of your silent ever-swaying power,
ye mighty, elemental throes,
In which and upon which we float, and every one of us is
buoy'd.

1889

1891-2

A PERSIAN LESSON

FOR his o'erarching and last lesson the greybeard sufi,¹
In the fresh scent of the morning in the open air,
On the slope of a teeming Persian rose-garden,
Under the ancient chestnut-tree wide spreading its branches,
Spoke to the young priests and students.

Finally my children, to envelop each word, each part of the
rest,
Allah is all, all, all—is immanent in every life and object,
May-be at many and many-a-more removes—yet Allah,
Allah, Allah is there.

'Has the estray wander'd far? Is the reason-why strangely
hidden?
Would you sound below the restless ocean of the entire world?
Would you know the dissatisfaction? the urge and spur of
every life;
The something never still'd—never entirely gone? the invis-
ible need of every seed?

10

'It is the central urge in every atom,
(Often unconscious, often evil, downfallen,)
To return to its divine source and origin, however distant,
Latent the same in subject and in object, without one excep-
tion.'

1891

1891-2

THE COMMONPLACE

THE commonplace I sing;
How cheap is health! how cheap nobility!
Abstinence, no falsehood, no gluttony, lust;
The open air I sing, freedom, toleration,

¹ An Islamic pantheistic mystic.

(Take here the mainest lesson—less from books—less from the schools,)

The common day and night—the common earth and waters,
Your farm—your work, trade, occupation,
The democratic wisdom underneath, like solid ground for all.

1891

1891-2

‘THE ROUNDED CATALOGUE DIVINE COMPLETE’

(Sunday ———. —Went this forenoon to church. A college professor, Rev. Dr. ———, gave us a fine sermon, during which I caught the above words; but the minister included in his ‘rounded catalogue’ letter and spirit, only the esthetic things, and entirely ignored what I name in the following:)

THE devilish and the dark, the dying and diseases’d,
The countless (nineteen-twentieths) low and evil, crude and
savage,

The crazed, prisoners in jail, the horrible, rank, malignant,

Venom and filth, serpents, the ravenous sharks, liars, the
dissolute;

(What is the part the wicked and the loathsome bear within
earth’s orbic scheme?)

Newts, crawling things in slime and mud, poisons,
The barren soil, the evil men, the slag and hideous rot.

1891

1891-2

MIRAGES

*(Noted verbatim after a supper-talk out doors in Nevada with
two old miners)*

MORE experiences and sights, stranger, than you’d think
for;

Times again, now mostly just after sunrise or before sun-
set,

Sometimes in spring, oftener in autumn, perfectly clear
weather, in plain sight,

Camps far or near, the crowded streets of cities and the shop-
fronts,

(Account for it or not—credit or not—it is all true,

And my mate there could tell you the like—we have often
 confab'd¹ about it,)
 People and scenes, animals, trees, colors and lines, plain as
 could be,
 Farms and dooryards of home, paths border'd with box,
 lilacs in corners,
 Weddings in churches, thanksgiving dinners, returns of long-
 absent sons,
 Glum funerals, the crape-veil'd mother and the daughters, 10
 Trials in courts, jury and judge, the accused in the box,
 Contestants, battles, crowds, bridges, wharves,
 Now and then mark'd faces of sorrow or joy,
 (I could pick them out this moment if I saw them again,)
 Show'd to me just aloft to the right in the sky-edge,
 Or plainly there to the left on the hill-tops.

1891

1891-2

L. OF G.'S PURPORT

NOT to exclude or demarcate, or pick out evils from their
 formidable masses (even to expose them,)
 But add, fuse, complete, extend—and celebrate the immortal
 and the good.

Haughty this song, its words and scope,
 To span vast realms of space and time,
 Evolution—the cumulative—growths and generations.

Begun in ripen'd youth and steadily pursued,
 Wandering, peering, dallying with all—war, peace, day and
 night absorbing,
 Never even for one brief hour abandoning my task,
 I end it here in sickness, poverty, and old age.

I sing of life, yet mind me well of death: 10
 To-day shadowy Death dogs my steps, my seated shape, and
 has for years—
 Draws sometimes close to me, as face to face.

1891

1891-2

¹ Confabulated, chatted.

THE UNEXPRESS'D

How dare one say it?

After the cycles, poems, singers, plays,
Vaunted Ionia's, India's—Homer, Shakspeare—the long, long
times, thick dotted roads, areas,

The shining clusters and the Milky Ways of stars—Nature's
pulses reap'd,

All retrospective passions, heroes, war, love, adoration,

All ages' plummets dropt to their utmost depths,

All human lives, throats, wishes, brains—all experiences'
utterance;

After the countless songs, or long or short, all tongues, all
lands,

Still something not yet told in poesy's voice or print—some-
thing lacking,

(Who knows? the best yet unexpress'd and lacking.)

10

1891

1891-2

GRAND IS THE SEEN

GRAND is the seen, the light, to me—grand are the sky and
stars,

Grand is the earth, and grand are lasting time and space,
And grand their laws, so multiform, puzzling, evolutionary;
But grander far the unseen soul of me, comprehending, en-
dowing all those,

Lighting the light, the sky and stars, delving the earth, sailing
the sea,

(What were all those, indeed, without thee, unseen soul? of
what amount without thee?)

More evolutionary, vast, puzzling, O my soul!

More multiform far—more lasting thou than they.

1891

1891-2

UNSEEN BUDS

UNSEEN buds, infinite, hidden well,

Under the snow and ice, under the darkness, in every square
or cubic inch,

Germinal, exquisite, in delicate lace, microscopic, unborn,
Like babes in wombs, latent, folded, compact, sleeping;

Billions of billions, and trillions of trillions of them waiting,
(On earth and in the sea—the universe—the stars there in the
heavens,)

Urging slowly, surely forward, forming endless,
And waiting ever more, forever more behind.

1891

1891-2

GOOD-BYE MY FANCY!

GOOD-BYE my Fancy!

Farewell dear mate, dear love!

I'm going away, I know not where,

Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever see you again,

So Good-bye my Fancy.

Now for my last—let me look back a moment;

The slower fainter ticking of the clock is in me,

Exit, nightfall, and soon the heart-thud stopping.

Long have we lived, joy'd, caress'd together;

Delightful!—now separation—Good-bye my Fancy.

10

Yet let me not be too hasty,

Long indeed have we lived, slept, filter'd, become really
blended into one;

Then if we die we die together, (yes, we'll remain one,)

If we go anywhere we'll go together to meet what happens,

May-be we'll be better off and blither, and learn something,

May-be it is yourself now really ushering me to the true songs,

(who knows?)

May-be it is you the mortal knob really undoing, turning—

so now finally,

Good-bye—and hail! my Fancy.

1891

1891-2

Old Age Echoes

(Posthumous Additions)

A KISS TO THE BRIDE

*Marriage of Nelly Grant, May 21, 1874*¹

SACRED, blithesome, undenied,
With benisons from East and West,
And salutations North and South,
Through me indeed to-day a million hearts and hands,
Wafting a million loves, a million soulfelt prayers;
—Tender and true remain the arm that shields thee!
Fair winds always fill the ship's sails that sail thee!
Clear sun by day, and light stars at night, beam on thee!
Dear girl—through me the ancient privilege too,
For the New World, through me, the old, old wedding 10
greeting,
O youth and health! O sweet Missouri rose! O bonny bride!
Yield thy red cheeks, thy lips, to-day,
Unto a Nation's loving kiss.

1874

1897

NAY, TELL ME NOT TO-DAY THE PUBLISH'D SHAME²

Winter of 1873, Congress in Session

NAY, tell me not to-day the publish'd shame,
Read not to-day the journal's crowded page,
The merciless reports still branding forehead after forehead,
The guilty column following guilty column.
To-day to me the tale refusing,
Turning from it—from the white capitol turning,

¹ The daughter of President Grant was married to Captain Algernon Charles Sartoris, the grandson of Charles Kemble, in the White House.

² The political corruption of this period which Mark Twain satirized in *The Gilded Age*, published in this year.

Far from these swelling domes, topt with statues,
More endless, jubilant, vital visions rise
Unpublish'd, unreported.

Through all your quiet ways, or North or South, you Equal 10
States, you honest farms,
Your million untold manly healthy lives, or East or West,
city or country,
Your noiseless mothers, sisters, wives, unconscious of their
good,
Your mass of homes nor poor nor rich, in visions rise—(even
your excellent poverties,)
Your self-distilling, never-ceasing virtues, self-denials, graces,
Your endless base of deep integrities within, timid but cer-
tain,
Your blessings steadily bestow'd, sure as the light, and still,
(Plunging to these as a determin'd diver down the deep
hidden waters,)
These, these to-day I brood upon—all else refusing, these
will I con,
To-day to these give audience.

1873

1897

TO BE AT ALL

(Cf. Stanza 27, 'Song of Myself,' p. 49)

To be at all—what is better than that?
I think if there were nothing more developed, the clam in its
callous shell in the sand were august enough.
I am not in any callous shell;
I am cased with supple conductors, all over,
They take every object by the hand, and lead it within me;
They are thousands, each one with his entry to himself;
They are always watching with their little eyes, from my head
to my feet;
One no more than a point lets in and out of me such bliss and
magnitude,
I think I could lift the girder of the house away if it lay be-
tween me and whatever I wanted.

1855

1897

DEATH'S VALLEY

To accompany a picture; by request. 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death,' from the painting by George Inness

NAY, do not dream, designer dark,
Thou hast portray'd or hit thy theme entire;
I, hoverer of late by this dark valley, by its confines, having
 glimpses of it,
Here enter lists with thee, claiming my right to make a sym-
 bol too.
For I have seen many wounded soldiers die,
After dread suffering—have seen their lives pass off with
 smiles;
And I have watch'd the death-hours of the old; and seen the
 infant die;
The rich with all his nurses and his doctors;
And then the poor, in meagreness and poverty;
And I myself for long, O Death, have breath'd my every 10
 breath
Amid the nearness and the silent thought of thee.
And out of these and thee,
I make a scene, a song (not fear of thee,
Nor gloom's ravines, nor bleak, nor dark—for I do not fear
 thee,
Nor celebrate the struggle, or contortion, or hard-tied knot),
Of the broad blessed light and perfect air, with meadows,
 rippling tides, and trees and flowers and grass,
And the low hum of living breeze—and in the midst God's
 beautiful eternal right hand,
Thee, holiest minister of Heaven—thee, envoy, usherer,
 guide at last of all,
Rich, florid, loosener of the stricture-knot call'd life,
Sweet, peaceful, welcome Death. 20

1892

1897

ON THE SAME PICTURE

Intended for first stanza of 'Death's Valley'

AYE, well I know 'tis ghastly to descend that valley:
Preachers, musicians, poets, painters, always render it,
Philosophs exploit—the battlefield, the ship at sea, the myriad
 beds, all lands,

All, all the past have enter'd, the ancientest humanity we
 know,
 Syria's, India's, Egypt's, Greece's, Rome's;
 Till now for us under our very eyes spreading the same to-
 day,
 Grim, ready, the same to-day, for entrance, yours and mine,
 Here, here 'tis limn'd.

1892

1897

A THOUGHT OF COLUMBUS

THE mystery of mysteries, the crude and hurried ceaseless
 flame, spontaneous, bearing on itself.
 The bubble and the huge, round, concrete orb!
 A breath of Deity, as thence the bulging universe unfolding!
 The many issuing cycles from their precedent minute!
 The eras of the soul incepting in an hour,
 Haply the widest, farthest evolutions of the world and
 man.

Thousands and thousands of miles hence, and now four
 centuries back,
 A mortal impulse thrilling its brain cell,
 Reck'd or unreck'd, the birth can no longer be postpon'd:
 A phantom of the moment, mystic, stalking, sudden,
 Only a silent thought, yet toppling down of more than walls
 of brass or stone.
 (A flutter at the darkness' edge as if old Time's and Space's
 secret near revealing.)
 A thought! a definite thought works out in shape.
 Four hundred years roll on.
 The rapid cumulus—trade, navigation, war, peace, demo-
 cracy, roll on;
 The restless armies and the fleets of time following their
 leader—the old camps of ages pitch'd in newer, larger
 areas,
 The tangl'd, long-deferr'd, éclaircissement of human life and
 hopes boldly begins untying,
 As here to-day up-grows the Western World.

(An added word yet to my song, far Discoverer, as ne'er
 before sent back to son of earth—
 If still thou hearest, hear me,

10

20

Voicing as now—lands, races, arts, bravas to thee,
O'er the long backward path to thee—one vast concensus
north, south, east, west,
Soul plaudits! acclamation! reverent echoes!
One manifold, huge memory to thee! oceans and lands!
The modern world to thee and thought of thee!)

1891

1897

ALPHABETICAL TITLE INDEX

- Aboard at a Ship's Helm, 218
Abraham Lincoln, born February 12, 1809, 418
Adieu to a Soldier, 272
After the Dazzle of Day, 418
After the Sea-Ship, 222
After the Supper and Talk, 436
Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals, 93
Ah, Poverties, Wincings, and Sulky Retreats, 393
All is Truth, 390
America, 417
Among the Multitude, 414
An Army Corps on the March, An, 253
And yet not You Alone, 420
Apparitions, 439
Are You the New Person Drawn toward Me?, 106
Artilleryman's Vision, The, 266
As Adam Early in the Morning, 96
As at Thy Portals Also Death, 407
As Consequent, etc., 298
As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life, 214
As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap, Camerado, 270
As I Ponder'd in Silence, 1
As I Sit Writing Here, 416
As I Walk These Broad Majestic Days, 399
As I Watch'd the Ploughman Ploughing, 374
As if a Phantom Caress'd Me, 368
As the Greeks' Signal Flame, 435
As the Time Draws Nigh, 400
As they Draw to a Close, 410
As Toilsome I Wander'd Virginia's Woods, 258
Ashes of Soldiers, 402
Assurances, 369
- Base of All Metaphysics, The, 104
Beat! Beat! Drums!, 237
Beautiful Women, 232
Beginners, 7
Beginning My Studies, 7

Behold This Swarthy Face, 108
Bivouac on a Mountain Side, 252
Boston Ballad, A, 223
Bravest Soldiers, The, 415
Bravo, Paris Exposition!, 442
Broadway, 425
Broadway Pageant, A, 205
By Blue Ontario's Shore, 283
By Broad Potomac's Shore, 395
By That Long Scan of Waves, 421
By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame, 253

Calming Thought of All, The, 429
Camps of Green, 408
Carol Closing Sixty-Nine, A, 415
Cavalry Crossing a Ford, 252
Centenarian's Story, The, 248
Chanting the Square Deific, 365
Child's Amaze, A, 232
Christmas Greeting, A, 445
City Dead-House, The, 306
City of Orgies, 108
City of Ships, 248
Clear Midnight, A, 400
Come Up from the Fields Father, 254
Commonplace, The, 449
Continuities, 427
Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, 135

Dalliance of the Eagles, The, 231
Darest Thou Now O Soul, 364
Dead Emperor, The, 434
Dead Tenor, The, 426
Death of General Grant, 423
Death's Valley, 456
Delicate Cluster, 271
Dirge for Two Veterans, 264
Dismantled Ship, The, 435
Dying Veteran, The, 432

Earth, My Likeness, 113
Eidólons, 4
Eighteen Sixty-One, 237

Election Day, November 1884, 421
Ended Day, An, 440
Ethiopia Saluting the Colours, 267
Europe, the 72d and 73d Years of These States, 225
Evening Lull, An, 436
Excelsior, 392

Faces, 381
Facing West from California's Shores, 96
Fancies at Navesink, 419
Farm Picture, A, 231
Fast-Anchor'd Eternal O Love, 114
First Dandelion, The, 417
First O Songs for a Prelude, 234
Font of Type, A, 416
For Him I Sing, 7
For You O Democracy, 101
France, the 18th Year of These States, 199
From Far Dakota's Cañons (June 25, 1876), 396
From Montauk Point, 414
From Paumanok Starting I Fly Like a Bird, 238
From Pent-up Aching Rivers, 79
Full of Life Now, 115

Germs, 228
Give me the Splendid Silent Sun, 262
Gliding o'er All, 233
Glimpse, A, 112
Gods, 227
'Going Somewhere,' 428
Good-bye My Fancy, 438
Good-bye My Fancy!, 453
Grand is the Seen, 452

Had I the Choice, 419
Halcyon Days, 418
Hand-Mirror, A, 227
Hast Never Come to Thee an Hour, 233
Here the Frailest Leaves of Me, 112
How Solemn as One by One, 269
Hush'd be the Camps To-day, 286
461

I am He that Aches with Love, 94
I Dream'd in a Dream, 113
I Hear America Singing, 10
I Hear It was Charged against Me, 110
I Heard You Solemn-Sweet Pipes of the Organ, 95
I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing, 108
I Saw Old General at Bay, 266
I Sing the Body Electric, 81
I Sit and Look Out, 230
I was Looking a Long While, 323
In Cabin'd Ships at Sea, 2
In Paths Untrodden, 97
Interpolation Sounds, 442
Italian Music in Dakota, 333

Joy, Shipmate, Joy!, 410

Kiss to the Bride, A, 454
Kosmos, 327

L. of G.'s Purport, 451
Last Invocation, The, 373
Last of Ebb, and Daylight Waning, 420
Laws for Creations, 322
Leaf for Hand in Hand, A, 112
Life, 428
Life and Death, 430
Lingering Last Drops, 437
Lo, Victress on the Peaks, 271
Locations and Times, 233
Long, Long Hence, 422
Long, too Long America, 262
Look Down Fair Moon, 269

Mannahatta, 389
Mannahatta, 414
March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown, A, 256
Me Imperturbe, 9
Mediums, 394
Memories, 417
Miracles, 324
Mirages, 451
Mother and Babe, 232

My Canary Bird, 416
My Legacy, 407
My Picture-Gallery, 334
Myself and Mine, 200
My 71st Year, 439
Mystic Trumpeter, The, 384

Native Moments, 95
Nay, Tell Me Not To-day the Publish'd Shame, 454
Night on the Prairies, 372
No Labor-Saving Machine, 112
Noiseless, Patient Spider, A, 370
Not Heat Flames up and Consumes, 107
Not Heaving from My Ribb'd Breast Only, 102
Not Meagre, Latent Boughs Alone, 434
Not the Pilot, 239
Not Youth Pertains to Me, 268
Now Finalè to the Shore, 411
Now Precedent Songs, Farewell, 435

O Captain! My Captain!, 282
O Hymen! O Hymenee!, 94
O Living Always, Always Dying, 371
O Magnet-South, 388
O Me! O Life!, 229
O Star of France, 329
O Tan-Faced Prairie-Boy, 269
O You whom I Often and Silently Come, 115
Of Him I Love Day and Night, 367
Of that Blithe Throat of Thine, 424
Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances, 103
Offerings, 234
Old Age's Lambent Peaks, 436
Old Age's Ship & Crafty Death's, 440
Old Chants, 444
Old Ireland, 305
Old Man's Thought of School, An, 331
Old Salt Kossabone, 426
Old War-Dreams, 397
On Journeys through the States, 8
On, on the Same, ye Jocund Twain!, 438
On the Beach at Night, 219
On the Beach at Night Alone, 220

463

On the Same Picture, 456
Once I Pass'd through a Populous City, 95
One Hour to Madness and Joy, 92
One's Self I Sing, 1
Orange Buds by Mail from Florida, 433
Osceola, 447
Others may Praise What They Like, 327
Our Old Feuillage, 145
Out from Behind this Mask, 319
Outlines for a Tomb, 317
Out of May's Shows Selected, 418
Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking, 209
Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd, 93
Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice, 265
Ox-Tamer, The, 330

Pallid Wreath, The, 439
Passage to India, 340
Patrolling Barnegat, 222
Paumanok, 414
Paumanok Picture, A, 379
Pensive and Faltering, 374
Pensive on Her Dead Gazing, 407
Perfections, 229
Persian Lesson, The, 449
Pilot in the Mist, The, 409
Pioneers, O Pioneers, 193
Poets to Come, 11
Portals, 410
Prairie-Grass Dividing, The, 110
Prairie States, The, 334
Prairie Sunset, A, 432
Prayer of Columbus, 348
Promise to California, A, 111
Proud Music of the Storm, 334
Proudly the Flood Comes In, 421

Queries to My Seventieth Year, 416
Quicksand Years, 369

Race of Veterans, 268
Reconciliation, 269
Recorders Ages Hence, 104

Red Jacket (from Aloft), 423
 Return of the Heroes, The, 299
 Reversals, 297
 Rich Givers, The, 230
 Riddle Song, A, 391
 Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deep, 244
 Roaming in Thoughts, 231
 Roots and Leaves Themselves Alone, 106
 'Rounded Catalogue Divine Complete, The,' 450
 Runner, The, 232

Sail Out for Good, Eidolon Yacht!, 437
 Salut au Monde, 116
 Savantism, 9
 Scented Herbage of my Breast, 97
 Shakspeare-Bacon's Cipher, 441
 Ship Starting, The, 9
 Shut not Your Doors, 10
 Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Grim, A, 257
 Singer in the Prison, The, 314
 Sleepers, The, 350
 Small the Theme of My Chant, 428
 So Long, 411
 Sobbing of the Bells, The, 409
 Sometimes with One I Love, 114
 Song at Sunset, 405
 Song for All Seas, All Ships, 221
 Song for Occupations, A, 179
 Song of Joys, A, 150
 Song of Myself, 23
 Song of Prudence, 311
 Song of the Answerer, 140
 Song of the Banner at Daybreak, 239
 Song of the Broad-Axe, 156
 Song of the Exposition, 166
 Song of the Open Road, 125
 Song of the Redwood-Tree, 175
 Song of the Rolling Earth, A, 186
 Song of the Universal, 191
 Soon Shall the Winter's Foil be Here, 181
 Sounds of the Winter, 445
 Spain, 1873-4: 395
 Sparks from the Wheel, 325
 Spirit That Form'd This Scene, 398
 Spirit Whose Work is Done, 272

Spontaneous Me, 90
Starting from Paumanok, 12
Still though the One I Sing, 10
Stronger Lessons, 432

Tears, 217
Tests, 329
Thanks in Old Age, 430
That Music Always Round Me, 370
That Shadow My Likeness, 115
Then Last of All, 421
There was a Child Went Forth, 304
These Carols, 411
These I Singing in Spring, 101
Thick-Sprinkled Bunting, 397
This Compost, 307
This Dust Was Once the Man, 283
Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood, 374
Thou Orb Aloft Full-Dazzling, 380
Thou Reader, 11
Thought, 232
Thought, 233
Thought, 233
Thought, 323
Thought, 373
Thought of Columbus, A, 457
Thoughts, 228
Thoughts, 393
Thoughts, 403
To a Certain Cantatrice, 8
To a Certain Civilian, 271
To a Common Prostitute, 323
To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire, 209
To a Historian, 3
To a Locomotive in Winter, 387
To a President, 230
To a Pupil, 325
To a Stranger, 109
To a Western Boy, 114
To Be At All, 455
To Foreign Lands, 3
To Get the Final Lilt of Songs, 425
To Him That Was Crucified, 320
To Old Age, 233
To One Shortly to Die, 371

To the Garden the World, 79
To the Leaven'd Soil They Trod, 273
To the Man-of-War Bird, 217
To the Old Cause, 3
To the Pending Year, 441
To The States, 8
To The States, To Identify the 16th, 17th, or 18th Presidentiad, 234
To the Sunset Breeze, 443
To Think of Time, 359
To Those Who 've Failed, 415
To You, 11
To You, 197
To-day and Thee, 418
Torch, The, 329
Transpositions, 358
Trickle Drops, 107
True Conquerors, 429
Turn O Libertad, 273
Twenty Years, 433
Twilight, 434
Twilight Song, A, 445

Unexpress'd, The, 452
Unfolded Out of the Folds, 326
United States to Old World Critics, The, 429
Unnamed Lands, 310
Unseen Buds, 452
Untold Want, The, 410

Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night, 255
Virginia—the West, 246
Visor'd, 232
Vocalism, 320
Voice from Death, A, 447
Voice of the Rain, The, 430

Wallabout Martyrs, The, 417
Wandering at Noon, 332
Warble for Lilac-Time, 316
Washington's Monument, February, 1885: 424
We Two Boys together Clinging, 111
Weave in, My Hardy Life, 395
What am I After All, 326

What Best I See in Thee, 398
What Place is Besieged?, 10
What Ship Puzzled at Sea, 370
What Think You I Take My Pen in Hand?, 113
When I Heard at the Close of the Day, 105
When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer, 229
When I Peruse the Conquer'd Fame, 110
When I Read the Book, 7
When Lilacs Last in Dooryard Bloom'd, 274
When the Full-Grown Poet Came, 446
While Not the Past Forgetting, 431
Whispers of Heavenly Death, 365
Who Learns My Lesson Complete, 327
Whoever You are Holding Me Now in Hand, 99
With All My Gifts, 333
With Antecedents, 203
With Husky, Haughty Lips, O Sea, 422
Woman Waits for Me, A, 88
World Below the Brine, The, 220
World Take Good Notice, 268
Wound-Dresser, The, 259

Year of Meteors (1859-60), 202
Year that Trembled and Reel'd Beneath Me, 259
Years of the Modern, 400
Yet, Yet, Ye Downcast Hours, 368
Yonnondio, 427
You Felons on Trial in the Courts, 321
You Lingering Sparse Leaves of Me, 434
You Tides with Ceaseless Swell, 420
Youth, Day, Old Age and Night, 191

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BIOGRAPHY—*continued*

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Introduction by S. Hill Burton. 609
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- Goethe's Conversations with Eckermann.** Intro. by Havelock Ellis.
851. (See also FICTION and POETRY)
- Goldsmith's Citizen of the World and The Bee.** Intro. by R. Church. 902
(See also FICTION and POETRY)
- Hamilton's The Federalist.** 519
- Hazlitt's Lectures on the English Comic Writers.** 411
- " **The Round Table and Shakespeare's Characters.** 65
- " **Spirit of the Age and Lectures on English Poets.** 459
- " **Table Talk.** 321
- " **Plain Speaker.** Introduction by P. P. Howe. 614
- Holmes's Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.** 66
- " **Poet at the Breakfast Table.** 68
- " **Professor at the Breakfast Table.** 67
- Hudson's (W. H.) A Shepherd's Life.** Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 926
- Hunt's (Leigh) Selected Essays.** Introduction by J. B. Priestley. 829
- Huxley's (Aldous) Stories, Essays, and Poems.** 935
- Irving's Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon.** 117
(See also BIOGRAPHY and HISTORY)
- Lamb's Essays or Elia.** Introduction by Augustine Birrell. 14
(See also BIOGRAPHY and FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)

ESSAYS AND BELLES-LETTRES—*continued*

- Landor's *Imaginary Conversations and Poems*: A selection. Edited with Introduction by Havelock Ellis. 890
- Lawrence (D. H.), *Stories, Essays, and Poems*. Edited by Desmond Hawkins. 958
- Lowell's (James Russell) *Among My Books*. 607
- Macaulay's *Essays*. 2 vols. Introduction by A. J. Grieve, M.A. 225-6
- " *Miscellaneous Essays and The Lays of Ancient Rome*. 439
(See also HISTORY and ORATORY)
- Machiavelli's *Prince*. Special Trans. and Intro. by W. K. Marriott. 280
(See also HISTORY)
- Martinengo-Cesaresco (Countess): *Essays in the Study of Folk-Songs*. 673
- Mazzini's *Duties of Man, etc.* Introduction by Thomas Jones, M.A. 224
- Milton's *Areopagitica, etc.* Introduction by Professor C. E. Vaughan. 795
(See also POETRY)
- Mitford's *Our Village*. Edited, with Intro., by Sir John Squire. 927
- Montagu's (Lady) *Letters*. Introduction by R. Brimley Johnson. 69
- Newman's *On the Scope and Nature of University Education, and a paper on Christianity and Scientific Investigation*. Introduction by Wilfred Ward. 723 (See also PHILOSOPHY)
- Osborne's (Dorothy) *Letters to Sir William Temple*. Edited and annotated by Judge Parry. 674
- Penn's *The Peace of Europe. Some Fruits of Solitude, etc.* 724
- Prelude to Poetry, *The*. Edited by Ernest Rhys. 789
- Reynold's *Discourses*. Introduction by L. March Phillipps. 118
- Rhys's *New Book of Sense and Nonsense*. 813
- Rousseau's *Emile*. Translated by Barbara Foxley. 518
(See also PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY)
- Ruskin's *Crown of Wild Olive and Cestus of Aglaia*. 323
- " *Elements of Drawing and Perspective*. 217
- " *Ethics of the Dust*. Introduction by Grace Rhys. 282
- " *Modern Painters*. 5 vols. Introduction by Lionel Cust. 208-12
- " *Pre-Raphaelitism. Lectures on Architecture and Painting, Academy Notes, 1855-9, and Notes on the Turner Gallery*. Introduction by Laurence Binyon. 218
- " *Sesame and Lilies, The Two Paths, and The King of the Golden River*. Introduction by Sir Oliver Lodge. 219
- " *Seven Lamps of Architecture*. Intro. by Selwyn Image. 207
- " *Stones of Venice*. 3 vols. Intro. by L. March Phillipps. 213-15
- " *Time and Tide with other Essays*. 450
- " *Unto This Last. The Political Economy of Art*. 216
(See also FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)
- Spectator, The*. 4 vols. Introduction by G. Gregory Smith. 164-7
- Spencer's (Herbert) *Essays on Education*. Intro. by C. W. Eliot. 504
- Sterne's *Sentimental Journey and Journal and Letters to Eliza*. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 796 (See also FICTION)
- Stevenson's *In the South Seas and Island Nights' Entertainments*. 769
- " *Virginibus Puerisque and Familiar Studies of Men and Books*. 765
(See also FICTION, POETRY, and TRAVEL)
- Swift's *Tale of a Tub, The Battle of the Books, etc.* 347
(See also BIOGRAPHY and FICTION)
- Swinerton's (Frank) *The Georgian Literary Scene*. 943
- Table Talk*. Edited by J. C. Thornton. 906
- Taylor's (Isaac) *Words and Places, or Etymological Illustrations of History, Ethnology, and Geography*. Intro. by Edward Thomas. 517
- Thackeray's (W. M.) *The English Humorists and The Four Georges*. Introduction by Walter Jerrold. 610
(See also FICTION)
- Thoreau's *Walden*. Introduction by Walter Raymond. 281
- Trench's *On the Study of Words and English Past and Present*. Introduction by George Sampson. 788
- Tytler's *Essay on the Principles of Translation*. 168
- Walton's *Compleat Angler*. Introduction by Andrew Lang. 70

FICTION

- Aimard's The Indian Scout. 428
 Ainsworth's (Harrison) Old St Paul's. Intro. by W. E. A. Axon. 523
 " " The Admirable Crichton. Intro. by E. Rhys. 804
 " " The Tower of London. 400
 " " Windsor Castle. 709
 " " Rookwood. Intro. by Frank Swinnerton. 870
 American Short Stories of the Nineteenth Century. Edited by John Cournos. 840
 Austen's (Jane) Emma. Introduction by R. B. Johnson. 24
 " " Mansfield Park. Introduction by R. B. Johnson. 23
 " " Northanger Abbey and Persuasion. Introduction by R. B. Johnson. 25
 " " Pride and Prejudice. Introduction by R. B. Johnson. 22
 " " Sense and Sensibility. Intro. by R. B. Johnson. 21
 Balzac's (Honoré de) Atheist's Mass. Preface by George Saintsbury. 229
 " " Catherine de Médici. Introduction by George Saintsbury. 419
 " " Christ in Flanders. Introduction by George Saintsbury. 284
 " " Cousin Pons. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 463
 " " Eugénie Grandet. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 169
 " " Lost Illusions. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 656
 " " Old Goriot. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 170
 " " The Cat and Racket, and Other Stories. 349
 " " The Chouans. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 285
 " " The Country Doctor. Intro. George Saintsbury. 530
 " " The Country Parson. 686 (bury. 286)
 " " The Quest of the Absolute. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 596
 " " The Rise and Fall of César Birotteau. 596
 " " The Wild Ass's Skin. Intro. George Saintsbury. 26
 " " Ursule Mirouët. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 733
 Barbusse's Under Fire. Translated by Fitzwater Wray. 798
 Bennett's (Arnold) The Old Wives' Tale. 919
 Blackmore's (R. D.) Lorna Doone. 304
 Borrow's Lavengro. Introduction by Thomas Seccombe. 119
 " " Romany Rye. 120 (See also TRAVEL)
 Brontë's (Anne) The Tenant of Wildfell Hall and Agnes Grey. 685
 " (Charlotte) Jane Eyre. Introduction by May Sinclair. 287
 " " Shirley. Introduction by May Sinclair. 288
 " " The Professor. Introduction by May Sinclair. 417
 " " Villette. Introduction by May Sinclair. 351
 " (Emily) Wuthering Heights. 243
 Burney's (Fanny) Evelina. Introduction by R. B. Johnson. 352
 Butler's (Samuel) Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited. Introduction by Desmond MacCarthy. 881
 " " The Way of All Flesh. Intro. by A. J. Hoppé. 895
 Collins' (Wilkie) The Woman in White. 464
 Conrad's Lord Jim. Introduction by R. B. Cunninghame Grahame. 925
 Converse's (Florence) Long Will. 328
 Dana's (Richard H.) Two Years before the Mast. 588
 Daudet's Tartarin of Tarascon and Tartarin of the Alps. 423
 Defoe's Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders. Intro. by G. A. Aitken
 " Captain Singleton. Introduction by Edward Garnett. 74 [837
 " Journal of the Plague Year. Introduction by G. A. Aitken. 289
 " Memoirs of a Cavalier. Introduction by G. A. Aitken. 283
 (See also FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)
 CHARLES DICKENS' WORKS. Each volume with an Intro. by G. K. Chesterton.
 American Notes. 290
 Barnaby Rudge. 76
 Bleak House. 236
 Child's History of England. 291
 Christmas Books. 239
 Christmas Stories. 414
 David Copperfield. 242
 Dombey and Son. 240
 Edwin Drood. 725
 Great Expectations. 234
 Hard Times. 292
 Little Dorrit. 293
 Martin Chuzzlewit. 241
 Nicholas Nickleby. 238

FICTION—*continued*

CHARLES DICKENS' WORKS—*continued*

- Old Curiosity Shop. 173
 Oliver Twist. 233
 Our Mutual Friend. 294
 Pickwick Papers. 235
 Disraeli's Coningsby. Introduction by Langdon Davies. 535
 Dostoevsky's (Fyodor) Crime and Punishment. Introduction by Laurence Irving. 501
 " " Letters from the Underworld and Other Tales. Translated by C. J. Hogarth. 654
 " " Poor Folk and the Gambler. Translated by C. J. Hogarth. 711
 " " The Possessed. Introduction by J. Middleton Murry. 2 vols. 861-2
 " " The House of the Dead, or Prison Life in Siberia. Introduction by Madame Stepniak. 533
 " " The Brothers Karamazov. Translated by Constance Garnett. 2 vols. 802-3
 " " The Idiot. 682
 Du Maurier's (George) Trilby. Introduction by Sir Gerald du Maurier. With the original illustrations. 863
 Dumas' Black Tulip. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 174
 " Chicot the Jester. 421
 " Le Chevalier de Maison Rouge. Intro. by Julius Bramont. 614
 " Marguerite de Valois ('La Reine Margot'). 326
 " The Count of Monte Cristo. 2 vols. 393-4
 " The Forty-Five. 420
 " The Three Musketeers. 81
 " The Vicomte de Bragelonne. 3 vols. 593-5.
 " Twenty Years After. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 175
 Edgar's Cressy and Poitiers. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 17
 " Runnymede and Lincoln Fair. Intro. by L. K. Hughes. 320
 (See also FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)
 Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent and The Absentee. 410
 Eliot's (George) Adam Bede. 27
 " " Felix Holt. 353
 " " Middlemarch. 2 vols. 854-5
 " " Mill on the Floss. Intro. Sir W. Robertson Nicoll. 325
 " " Romola. Introduction by Rudolf Dircks. 231
 " " Scenes of Clerical Life. 468
 " " Silas Marner. Introduction by Annie Matheson. 121
 English Short Stories. An Anthology. 743
 Erckmann-Chatrian's The Conscript and Waterloo. 354
 " The Story of a Peasant. Translated by C. J. Hogarth. 2 vols. 706-7
 Fenimore Cooper's The Deerslayer. 77
 " " The Last of the Mohicans. 79
 " " The Pathfinder. 78
 " " The Pioneers. 171
 " " The Prairie. 172
 Ferrier's (Susan) Marriage. Introduction by H. L. Morrow. 816
 Fielding's Amelia. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 2 vols. 852-3
 " Jonathan Wild, and The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon. Introduction by George Saintsbury. 877
 " Joseph Andrews. Introduction by George Saintsbury. 467
 " Tom Jones. Intro. by George Saintsbury. 2 vols. 355-6
 Flaubert's Madame Bovary. Translated by Eleanor Marx-Aveling. Introduction by George Saintsbury. 808
 " Salammbô. Translated by J. S. Chartres. Introduction by Professor F. C. Green. 869 [969
 " Sentimental Education. Translated by Anthony Goldsmith.
 France's (Anatole) At the Sign of the Reine Pédaque and The Revolt of the Angels. Introduction by A. J. Hoppé. 967
 French Short Stories of the 19th and 20th Centuries. Selected, with an Introduction by Professor F. C. Green. 896
 Galsworthy's (John) The Country House. 917
 Galt's Annals of a Parish. Introduction by Baillie Macdonald. 427

FICTION—*continued*

- Gaskell's (Mrs) *Cousin Phillis*, etc. Intro. by Thos. Seecombe. 015
 " *Cranford*. 83
 " *Mary Barton*. Introduction by Thomas Seecombe. 598
 " *Sylvia's Lovers*. Intro. by Mrs. Ellis Chadwick. 524
Ghost Stories. Edited by John Hampden. 952
 (See also POETRY AND DRAMA)
 Gleig's (G. R.) *The Subaltern*. 708
 Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Carlyle's Translation. 8 vols. 599-600
 (See also ESSAYS and POETRY)
 Gogol's (Nicol) *Dead Souls*. Translated by C. J. Hogarth. 726
 " *Taras Bulba and Other Tales*. 740
 Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. Introduction by J. M. D. 295
 (See also ESSAYS and POETRY)
 Goncharov's *Oblomov*. Translated by Natalie Duddington. 878
 Gorki's *Through Russia*. Translated by C. J. Hogarth. 741
 Grossmith's (George and Weedon) *Diary of a Nobody*. 963
 Harte's (Bret) *Luck of Roaring Camp and other Tales*. 681
 Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*. Intro. Ernest Rhys. 176
 " *The Scarlet Letter*. 122
 " *The Blithedale Romance*. 592
 " *The Marble Faun*. Intro. by Sir Leslie Stephen. 424
 " *Twice Told Tales*. 531 (See also FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)
 Hugo's (Victor) *Les Misérables*. Intro. by S. R. John. 2 vols. 363-4
 " " *Notre Dame*. Introduction by A. C. Swinburne. 422
 " " *Toilers of the Sea*. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 509
Italian Short Stories. Edited by D. Pettoello. 876
 James's (G. P. R.) *Richelieu*. Introduction by Rudolf Dircks. 357
 James's (Henry) *The Turn of the Screw and The Aspern Papers*. 912
 Jefferies's (Richard) *After London and Amaryllis at the Fair*. Intro. by David Garnett. 951 (See also FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)
 Kingsley's (Charles) *Alton Locke*. 462
 " " *Hereward the Wake*. Intro. by Ernest Rhys. 296
 " " *Hypatia*. 230
 " " *Westward Ho!* Introduction by A. G. Grieve. 20
 " " *Yeast*. 611
 (See also POETRY and FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)
 " (Henry) *Geoffrey Hamlyn*. 416
 " *Ravenshoe*. 28
 Lawrence's (D. H.) *The White Peacock*. 914
 Lever's *Harry Lorrequer*. Introduction by Lewis Melville. 177
 Loti's (Pierre) *Iceland Fisherman*. Translated by W. P. Baines.
 Lover's *Handy Andy*. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 178
 Lytton's *Harold*. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 15
 " *Last Days of Pompeii*. 80
 " *Last of the Barons*. Introduction by R. G. Watkin. 18
 " *Rienzi*. Introduction by E. H. Blakeney, M.A. 53
 (See also TRAVEL)
 MacDonald's (George) *Sir Gibbie*. 678 (See also ROMANCE)
 Mann's (Thomas) *Stories and Episodes*. Intro. by E. F. Bozman. 962
 Manning's *Mary Powell and Deborah's Diary*. Introduction by Katherine Tynan (Mrs Hinkson). 324
 " *Sir Thomas More*. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 19
 Marryat's *Jacob Faithful*. 618
 " *Mr Midshipman Easy*. Introduction by R. B. Johnson. 82
 " *Percival Keene*. Introduction by R. Brimley Johnson. 358
 " *Peter Simple*. Introduction by R. Brimley Johnson. 232
 " *The King's Own*. 580 (See also FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)
 Maugham's (Somerset) *Cakes and Ale*. 932
 Maupassant's *Short Stories*. Translated by Marjorie Laurie. Intro-
 duction by Gerald Gould. 907
 Melville's (Herman) *Moby Dick*. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 179
 " " *Omoo*. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 297
 " " *Typee*. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 180
 Meredith's (George) *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. 916

FICTION—continued

- Mérimée's *Carmen*, with Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*. Intro. by Philip Mickiewicz's (Adam) *Pan Tadeusz*. 842 [Henderson. 834]
 Modern Humour. Edited by Guy Pocock and M. M. Boznan. 957
 Modern Short Stories. Edited by John Hadfield. 954
 Moore's (George) *Esther Waters*. 933
 Mulock's *John Halifax, Gentleman*. Introduction by J. Shaylor. 123
 Neale's (J. M.) *The Fall of Constantinople*. 655 [Bullen. 676]
 Paltock's (Robert) *Peter Wilkins; or, The Flying Indians*. Intro. by A. H. Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*. Introduction by Osbert Burdett. 903
 Peacock's *Headlong Hall and Nightmare Abbey*. 327
 Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. Intro. by Padraic Colum. 336
 (See also POETRY)
 Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, with Mérimée's *Carmen*. Introduction by Priestley's *Angel Pavement*. 938 [Philip Henderson. 834]
 Pushkin's (Alexander) *The Captain's Daughter and Other Tales*. Trans. by Natalie Duddington. 898
 Quiller-Couch's (Sir Arthur) *Hetty Wesley*. 864 [2 vols. 865-6]
 Radcliffe's (Ann) *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Intro. by R. Austin Freeman.
 Reade's (C.) *The Cloister and the Hearth*. Intro. by A. C. Swinburne. 29
 " *Peg Woffington and Christie Johnstone*. 299
 Richardson's (Samuel) *Pamela*. Intro. by G. Saintsbury. 2 vols. 683-4
 " *Clarissa*. Intro. by Prof. W. L. Phelps. 4 vols. 882-5
 Russian Authors, *Short Stories from*. Trans. by R. S. Townsend. 755
 Sand's (George) *The Devil's Pool and François the Waif*. 534
 Scheffel's *Ekkehard: a Tale of the Tenth Century*. 529
 Scott's (Michael) *Tom Cringle's Log*. 710
- SIR WALTER SCOTT'S WORKS:**
Abbot, The. 124
Anne of Geierstein. 125
Antiquary, The. 126
Black Dwarf and Legend of Montrose. 128
Bride of Lammermoor. 129
Castle Dangerous and the Surgeon's Daughter. 130
Count Robert of Paris. 131
Fair Maid of Perth. 132
Fortunes of Nigel. 71
Guy Mannering. 133
Heart of Midlothian, The. 134
Highland Widow and Betrothed. 127
Ivanhoe. Intro. Ernest Rhys. 16
Kenilworth. 135
Monastery, The. 136
Old Mortality. 137
Peveril of the Peak. 133
Pirate, The. 139
Quentin Durward. 140
Redgauntlet. 141
Rob Roy. 142
St. Ronan's Well. 143
Talisman, The. 144
Waverley. 75
Woodstock. Intro. by Edward Garnett. 72
 (See also BIOGRAPHY and POETRY)
 Shchedrin's *The Golovlyov Family*. Translated by Natalie Duddington. Introduction by Edward Garnett. 908
 Shelley's (Mary Wollstonecraft) *Frankenstein*. 616
 Sheppard's *Charles Auchester*. Intro. by Jessie M. Middleton. 505
 Shorter Novels, Vol. I. *Elizabethan and Jacobean*. Edited by Philip Henderson. 824
 " " Vol. II. *Jacobean and Restoration*. Edited by Philip Henderson. 841
 " " Vol. III. *Eighteenth Century* (Beckford's *Vathek*, Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, and Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas*). 856
 Sienkiewicz (Henryk). *Tales from*. Edited by Monica M. Gardner. 871
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 Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle*. 2 vols. 838-9
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 Stendhal's *Scarlet and Black*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncreiff. 2 vols. 945-6
 Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Introduction by George Saintsbury. 617
 (See also ESSAYS)
 Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. *The Merry Men, and Other Tales*.
 " *The Master of Ballantrae and The Black Arrow*. 764 [767]

FICTION—*continued*

- Stevenson's *Treasure Island and Kidnapped*. 763
 " *St. Ives*. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 904
 (See also ESSAYS, POETRY, and TRAVEL)
 Surtees' *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities*. 817
 Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Unabridged Edition, with contemporary maps. Introduction by Harold Williams. 60
 Tales of Detection. Edited, with Introduction, by Dorothy L. Sayers. 923
 Thackeray's *Rose and the Ring and other stories*. Intro. Walter Jerrold.
 " *Esmond*. Introduction by Walter Jerrold. 73 [359
 " *Newcomes*. Introduction by Walter Jerrold. 2 vols. 465-6
 " *Pendennis*. Intro. by Walter Jerrold. 2 vols. 425-6
 " *Roundabout Papers*. 687
 " *Vanity Fair*. Introduction by Hon. Whitelaw Reid. 298
 " *Virginians*. Introduction by Walter Jerrold. 2 vols. 507-8
 (See also ESSAYS)
 Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Trans. by Rochelle S. Townsend. 2 vols. 612-13
 " *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*. Trans. by C. J. Hogarth. 591
 " *Master and Man, and other Parables and Tales*. 469
 " *War and Peace*. 3 vols. 525-7
 Trollope's (Anthony) *Barchester Towers*. 30
 " " *Dr. Thorne*. 360
 " " *Framley Parsonage*. Intro. by Ernest Rhys. 181
 " " *The Golden Lion of Granpère*. Introduction by Sir Hugh Walpole. 761
 " " *The Last Chronicles of Barset*. 2 vols. 391-2
 " " *Phineas Finn*. Intro. by Sir Hugh Walpole. 2 vols.
 " " *The Small House at Allington*. 361 [832-3
 " " *The Warden*. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 182
 Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. Translated by C. J. Hogarth. 742
 " *Liza*. Translated by W. R. S. Ralston. 677
 " *Virgin Soil*. Translated by Rochelle S. Townsend. 528
 Voltaire's *Candide and Other Tales*. 936
 Walpole's (Hugh) *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill*. 918
 Wells's (H. G.) *The Time Machine and The Wheels of Chance*. 915
 Whyte-Melville's *The Gladiators*. Introduction by J. Mavrogordato. 523
 Wood's (Mrs Henry) *The Channings*. 84
 Woolf's (Virginia) *To the Lighthouse*. Intro. by D. M. Hoare. 949
 Yonge's (Charlotte M.) *The Dove in the Eagle's Nest*. 329
 " " *The Heir of Redclyffe*. Intro. Mrs Meynoll. 362
 (See also FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)
 Zola's (Emile) *Germinal*. Translated by Havelock Ellis. 897

HISTORY

- Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, The. Translated by James Ingram. 624
 Bede's *Ecclesiastical History, etc.* Introduction by Vida D. Scudder. 479
 Burnet's *History of His Own Times*. 85
 Carlyle's *French Revolution*. Introduction by H. Belloc. 2 vols. 31-2
 (See also BIOGRAPHY and ESSAYS)
 Chesterton's *History of the United States*. Edited by Prof. D. W. Brogan, M.A. 965
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 De Joinville (See Villehardouin)
 Duruy's (Jean Victor) *A History of France*. 2 vols. 737-8
 Finlay's *Byzantine Empire*. 33
 " *Greece under the Romans*. 185
 Froude's *Henry VIII*. Intro. by Llewellyn Williams, M.P. 3 vols. 372-4
 " *Edward VI*. Intro. by Llewellyn Williams, M.P., B.C.L. 375
 " *Mary Tudor*. Intro. by Llewellyn Williams, M.P., B.C.L. 477
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 (See also ESSAYS and BIOGRAPHY)
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 (See also BIOGRAPHY)

HISTORY—*continued*

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- Irving's (Washington) Conquest of Granada. 478
(See also ESSAYS and BIOGRAPHY)
- Josephus' Wars of the Jews. Introduction by Dr Jacob Hart. 712
- Lutzwow's Bohemia: An Historical Sketch. Introduction by President T. G. Masaryk. Revised edition. 432
- Macaulay's History of England. 3 vols. 34-6
(See also ESSAYS and ORATORY)
- Maine's (Sir Henry) Ancient Law. 734
- Merivale's History of Rome. (An Introductory vol. to Gibbon.) 433
- Mignet's (F. A. M.) The French Revolution. 713
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- Sismondi's Italian Republics. 250
- Stanley's Lectures on the Eastern Church. Intro. by A. J. Grieve. 251
- Tacitus. Vol. I. Annals. Introduction by E. H. Blakeney. 273
" Vol. II. Agricola and Germania. Intro. E. H. Blakeney. 274
- Thierry's Norman Conquest. Intro. by J. A. Price, B.A. 2 vols. 198-9
- Villehardouin and De Joinville's Chronicles of the Crusades. Translated, with Introduction, by Sir F. Marzials, C.B. 333
- Voltaire's Age of Louis XIV. Translated by Martyn P. Pollack. 780

ORATORY

- Anthology of British Historical Speeches and Orations. Compiled by Ernest Rhys. 714
- Bright's (John) Speeches. Selected with Intro. by Joseph Sturge. 252
- Burke's American Speeches and Letters. 340. (See also ESSAYS)
- Demosthenes: Select Orations. 546
- Fox (Charles James): Speeches (French Revolutionary War Period). Edited with Introduction by Irene Cooper Willis, M.A. 759
- Lincoln's Speeches, etc. Intro. by the Rt Hon. James Bryce. 206
(See also BIOGRAPHY)
- Macaulay's Speeches on Politics and Literature. 399
(See also ESSAYS and HISTORY)
- Pitt's Orations on the War with France. 145

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

- A Kempis' Imitation of Christ. 484
- Ancient Hebrew Literature. Being the Old Testament and Apocrypha. Arranged by the Rev. R. B. Taylor. 4 vols. 253-6
- Aquinas, Thomas: Selected Writings. Edited by Rev. Fr D'Arcy. 953
- Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics of. Translated by D. P. Chase. Introduction by Professor J. A. Smith. 547
(See also CLASSICAL)
- Bacon's The Advancement of Learning. 719 (See also ESSAYS)
- Berkeley's (Bishop) Principles of Human Knowledge, New Theory of Vision. With Introduction by A. D. Lindsay. 483

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY—*continued*

- Boehme's (Jacob) *The Signature of All Things*, with Other Writings. Introduction by Clifford Bax. 569
- Browne's *Religio Medici*, etc. Intro. by Professor C. H. Herford. 92
- Bunyan's *Grace Abounding and Mr Badman*. Introduction by G. B. Harrison. 815 (See also ROMANCE)
- Burton's (Robert) *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Introduction by Holbrook Jackson. 3 vols. 886-8
- Butler's *Analogy of Religion*. Introduction by Rev. Ronald Bayne. 90
- Descartes' (René) *A Discourse on Method*. Translated by Professor John Veitch. Introduction by A. D. Lindsay. 570
- Ellis' (Havelock) *Selected Essays*. Introduction by J. S. Collis. 930
- Gore's (Charles) *The Philosophy of the Good Life*. 924
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- King Edward VI. *First and Second Prayer Books*. Introduction by the Right Rev. E. G. S. Gibson. 448
- Koran, *The*. Rodwell's Translation. 380
- Latimer's *Sermons*. Introduction by Canon Beeching. 40
- Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. 91
- Leibniz's *Philosophical Writings*. Selected and trans. by Mary Morris. Introduction by C. R. Morris, M.A. 905
- Locke's *Two Treatises of Civil Government*. Introduction by Professor William S. Carpenter. 751
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- „ *Subjection of Women*. (See Wollstonecraft, Mary, under SCIENCE)
- More's *Utopia*. Introduction by Judge O'Hagan. 461
- New Testament. Arranged in the order in which the books came to the Christians of the First Century. 93
- Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. Intro. by Dr Charles Sarolea. 636 (See also ESSAYS)
- Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Trans. by A. Tille and M. M. Bozman.
- Paine's *Rights of Man*. Introduction by G. J. Holyoake. 718 [892]
- Pascal's *Pensées*. Translated by W. F. Trotter. Introduction by T. S. Eliot. 874 [C.I.E. 403]
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- St Augustine's *Confessions*. Dr Pusey's Translation. 200
- St Francis: *The Little Flowers*, and *The Life of St. Francis*. 485
- Seeley's *Ecce Homo*. Introduction by Sir Oliver Lodge. 305
- Selection from St Thomas Aquinas. Edited by The Rev. Father M. C. D'Arcy. 953
- Spinoza's *Ethics*, etc. Translated by Andrew J. Boyle. With Introduction by Professor Santayana. 481
- Swedenborg's (Emmanuel) *Heaven and Hell*. 379
- „ „ *The Divine Love and Wisdom*. 635
- „ „ *The Divine Providence*. 658
- „ „ *The True Christian Religion*. 893

POETRY AND DRAMA

- Anglo-Saxon Poetry. Edited by Professor R. K. Gordon. 794
- Arnold's (Matthew) Poems, 1840-66, including *Thyrsis*. 334
- Ballads, A Book of British. Selected by R. B. Johnson. 572
- Beaumont and Fletcher, The Select Plays of. Introduction by Professor Baker, of Harvard University. 506
- Björnson's Plays. Vol. I. The Newly Married Couple. Leonardo, A Gauntlet. Trans. by R. Farquharson Sharp. 625
- " " Vol. II. The Editor, The Bankrupt, and The King. Translated by R. Farquharson Sharp. 696
- Blake's Poems and Prophecies. Introduction by Max Plowman. 792
- Browning's Poems, 1833-44. Introduction by Arthur Waugh. 41
- " " 1844-64. 42
- " Poems and Plays, 1871-90. 964
- " The Ring and the Book. Intro. by Chas. W. Hodell. 502
- Burns' Poems and Songs. Introduction by J. Douglas. 94
- Byron's Poetical and Dramatic Works. 3 vols. 486-8
- Calderon: Six Plays, translated by Edward FitzGerald. 819
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- Coleridge, Golden Book of. Edited by Stopford A. Brooke. 43
(See also ESSAYS)
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(See also BIOGRAPHY)
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- FitzGerald's (Edward) Omar Khayyám and Six Plays of Calderon. 819
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(See also ESSAYS and FICTION) [well. 921]
- Golden Book of Modern English Poetry, The. Edited by Thomas Cald-
- Golden Treasury of Longer Poems, The. Edited by Ernest Rhys. 746
- Goldsmith's Poems and Plays. Introduction by Austin Dobson. 415
(See also ESSAYS and FICTION)
- Gray's Poems and Letters. Introduction by John Drinkwater. 628
- Hebbel's Plays. Translated with an Introduction by Dr C. K. Allen. 694
- Heine: Prose and Poetry. 911
- Herbert's Temple. Introduction by Edward Thomas. 309
- Herrick's Hesperides and Noble Numbers. Intro. by Ernest Rhys. 310
- Ibsen's Brand. Translated by F. E. Garrett. 716
- " Ghosts, The Warriors at Helgeland, and An Enemy of the People. Translated by R. Farquharson Sharp. 552
- " Lady Inger of Ostraat, Love's Comedy, and The League of Youth. Translated by R. Farquharson Sharp. 729
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- Keats' Poems. 101
- Kingsley's (Charles) Poems. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 793
(See also FICTION and FOR YOUNG PEOPLE)
- Langland's (William) Piers Plowman. 571
- Lessing's Laocoon, Minna von Barnhelm, and Nathan the Wise. 843
- Longfellow's Poems. Introduction by Katherine Tynan. 382
- Marlowe's Plays and Poems. Introduction by Edward Thomas. 383
- Milton's Poems. Introduction by W. H. D. Rouse. 384 (See also ESSAYS)

POETRY AND DRAMA—*continued*

- Minor Elizabethan Drama. Vol. I. Tragedy. Selected, with Introduction, by Professor Thorndike. Vol. II. Comedy. 491-2
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(See also FICTION)
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- Proctor's (Adelaide A.) Legends and Lyrics. 150
- Restoration Plays, A Volume of. Introduction by Edmund Gosse. 604
- Rossetti's Poems and Translations. Introduction by E. G. Gardner. 627
- Scott's Poems and Plays. Intro. by Andrew Lang. 2 vols. 550-1
(See also BIOGRAPHY and FICTION)
- Shakespeare's Comedies. 153
- " Historical Plays, Poems, and Sonnets. 154
- " Tragedies. 155
- Shelley's Poetical Works. Introduction by A. H. Koszul. 2 vols. 257-8
- Sheridan's Plays. 95
- Spenser's Faerie Queene. Intro. by Prof. J. W. Hales. 2 vols. 443-4
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- Vol. II. 1857-70. 626
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- Wilde (Oscar), Plays, Prose Writings, and Poems. 858
- Wordsworth's Shorter Poems. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 203
- " Longer Poems. Note by Editor. 311

REFERENCE

- Atlas of Ancient and Classical Geography. Many coloured and line Maps; Historical Gazetteer, Index, etc. 451
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- Dates, Dictionary of. 554
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- " " " II. America. Do. 553
- " " " III. Asia. Do. 633
- " " " IV. Africa and Australia. Do. 662
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 " The Life and Death of Jason. 575
 Morte d'Arthur Romances, Two. Introduction by Lucy A. Paton. 634
 Nibelungs, The Fall of the. Translated by Margaret Armour. 312
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SCIENCE

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 (See also TRAVEL) [E. F. Bozman. 922
 Eddington's (Sir Arthur) The Nature of the Physical World. Intro. by Euclid: the Elements of. Todhunter's Edition. Introduction by Sir Thomas Heath, K.C.B. 891
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 Galton's Inquiries into Human Faculty. Revised by Author. 263
 George's (Henry) Progress and Poverty. 560
 Hahnemann's (Samuel) The Organon of the Rational Art of Healing. Introduction by C. E. Wheeler. 663
 Harvey's Circulation of the Blood. Introduction by Ernest Parkyn. 262
 Howard's State of the Prisons. Introduction by Kenneth Ruck. 835
 Huxley's Essays. Introduction by Sir Oliver Lodge. 47
 " Select Lectures and Lay Sermons. Intro. Sir Oliver Lodge. 498
 Lyell's Antiquity of Man. With an introduction by R. H. Rastall. 700
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 White's Selborne. Introduction by Principal Windle. 48
 Wollstonecraft (Mary), The Rights of Woman, with John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women. 825

TRAVEL AND TOPOGRAPHY

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 Anson's Voyages. Introduction by John Masefield. 510
 Bates' Naturalist on the Amazon. With Illustrations. 446
 Belt's The Naturalist in Nicaragua. Intro. by Anthony Belt, F.L.S. 661
 Borrow's (George) The Gypsies in Spain. Intro. by Edward Thomas. 697
 " " The Bible in Spain. Intro. by Edward Thomas. 151
 " " Wild Wales. Intro. by Theodore Watts-Dunton. 49
 (See also FICTION)
 Boswell's Tour in the Hebrides with Dr Johnson. 387
 (See also BIOGRAPHY)
 Burton's (Sir Richard) First Footsteps in East Africa. 500
 Cobbett's Rural Rides. Introduction by Edward Thomas. 2 vols. 638-9
 Cook's Voyages of Discovery. 99
 Crèvecoeur's (H. St John) Letters from an American Farmer. 640
 Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle. 104
 (See also SCIENCE)
 Defoe's Tour through England and Wales. Introduction by G. D. H. [Cole. 820-1
 (See also FICTION)
 Dennis' Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria. 2 vols. 183-4
 Dufferin's (Lord) Letters from High Latitudes. 499
 Ford's Gatherings from Spain. Introduction by Thomas Okey. 152
 Franklin's Journey to the Polar Sea. Intro. by Capt. R. F. Scott. 447
 Giraldus Cambrensis: Itinerary and Description of Wales. 272
 Hakluyt's Voyages. 8 vols. 264, 265, 313, 314, 333, 339, 388, 389
 Kinglake's Eothen. Introduction by Harold Spender, M.A. 337
 Lane's Modern Egyptians. With many Illustrations. 315
 Mandeville's (Sir John) Travels. Introduction by Jules Bramont. 812
 Park (Mungo): Travels. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 205
 Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers. Selected by E. H. Blakeney, M.A. 778
 Polo's (Marco) Travels. Introduction by John Masefield. 306
 Roberts' The Western Avernus. Intro. by Cunningham Grahame. 762
 Speke's Discovery of the Source of the Nile. 50
 Stevenson's An Inland Voyage, Travels with a Donkey, and Silverado
 Squatters. 766
 (See also ESSAYS, FICTION, and POETRY)
 Stow's Survey of London. Introduction by H. B. Wheatley. 589
 Wakefield's Letter from Sydney and Other Writings on Colonization. 828
 Waterton's Wanderings in South America. Intro. by E. Selous. 772
 Young's Travels in France and Italy. Intro. by Thomas Okey. 720

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Aesop's and Other Fables: An Anthology from all sources. 657
 Alcott's Little Men. Introduction by Grace Rhys. 512
 " Little Women and Good Wives. Intro. by Grace Rhys. 243
 Andersen's Fairy Tales. Illustrated by the Brothers Robinson. 4
 " More Fairy Tales. Illustrated by Mary Shillabeer. 822
 Annals of Fairyland. The Reign of King Oberon. 365
 " The Reign of King Cole. 366
 Asgard and the Norse Heroes. Translated by Mrs Boulton. 689
 Baker's Cast up by the Sea. 539
 Ballantyne's Coral Island. 245
 " Martin Rattler. 246
 " Ungava. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 276
 Browne's (Frances) Granny's Wonderful Chair. Intro. by Dollie Radford. [112
 Bulfinch's (Thomas) The Age of Fable. 472
 " Legends of Charlemagne. Intro. by Ernest Rhys. 556
 Canton's A Child's Book of Saints. Illustrated by T. H. Robinson. 61
 (See also ESSAYS)
 Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, Through the Looking-Glass, etc. Illus-
 trated by the Author. Introduction by Ernest Rhys. 836
 Clarke's Tales from Chaucer. 537

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE—*continued*

- Collodi's Pinocchio; the Story of a Puppet. 538
 Converse's (Florence) The House of Prayer. 923
 (See also FICTION)
 Cox's (Sir G. W.) Tales of Ancient Greece. 721
 Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. Illustrated by J. A. Symington. 59
 (See also FICTION)
 Dodge's (Mary Mapes) Hans Brinker; or, The Silver Skates. 620
 Edgar's Heroes of England. 471
 (See also FICTION)
 Ewing's (Mrs) Jackanapes, Daddy Darwin's Dovecot, illustrated by
 R. Caldecott, and The Story of a Short Life. 731
 " " Mrs Overthway's Remembrances. 730
 Fairy Gold. Illustrated by Herbert Cole. 157
 Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights. Illustrated. 249
 Froissart's Chronicles. 57
 Gatty's Parables from Nature. Introduction by Grace Rhys. 158
 Grimm's Fairy Tales. Illustrated by R. Anning Bell. 56
 Hawthorne's Wonder Book and Tanglewood Tales. 5
 (See also FICTION)
 Howard's Rattlin the Reefer. Introduction by Guy Pocock. 857
 Hughes' Tom Brown's School Days. Illustrated by T. Robinson. 58
 Ingelow's (Jean) Mopsa the Fairy. Illustrated by Dora Curtis. 619
 Jefferies's (Richard) Bevis, the Story of a Boy. Intro. by Guy Pocock.
 Kingsley's Heroes. Introduction by Grace Rhys. 113 [850]
 " Madam How and Lady Why. Introduction by C. I. Gardiner.
 M.A. 777
 " Water Babies and Glaucus. 277
 (See also POETRY and FICTION)
 Kingston's Peter the Whaler. 6
 " Three Midshipmen. 7
 Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare. Illustrated by A. Rackham.
 (See also BIOGRAPHY and ESSAYS)
 Lear (and Others): A Book of Nonsense. 806
 Marryat's Children of the New Forest. 247
 " Little Savage. Introduction by R. Brimley Johnson. 159
 " Masterman Ready. Introduction by R. Brimley Johnson. 160
 " Settlers in Canada. Introduction by R. Brimley Johnson. 370
 " (Edited by) Rattlin the Reefer. 857
 (See also FICTION)
 Martineau's Feats on the Fjords, etc. Illustrated by A. Rackham. 429
 Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes. Illustrated. 473
 Plays for Boys and Girls. Edited by John Hampden. 966
 Poetry Book for Boys and Girls. Edited by Guy Pocock. 894
 Reid's (Mayne) The Boy Hunters of the Mississippi. 582
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 Ruskin's The Two Boyhoods and Other Passages. 688
 (See also ESSAYS)
 Sewell's (Anna) Black Beauty. Illustrated by Lucy Kemp-Welch. 748
 Spyri's (Johanna) Heidi. Illustrations by Lizzie Lawson. 431
 Story Book for Boys and Girls. Edited by Guy Pocock. 934
 Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. 371
 Swiss Family Robinson. Illustrations by Chas. Folkard. 430
 Verne's (Jules) Abandoned. 50 Illustrations. 368
 " " Dropped from the Clouds. 50 Illustrations. 367
 " " Five Weeks in a Balloon and Around the World in Eighty
 Days. Translated by Arthur Chambers and P. Desages.
 " " Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. 319 [779]
 " " The Secret of the Island. 50 Illustrations. 369
 Yonge's (Charlotte M.) The Book of Golden Deeds. 330 [579]
 " " The Lances of Lynwood. Illus. by Dora Curtis.
 " " The Little Duke. Illustrated by Dora Curtis. 470
 (See also FICTION)

